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# Shakespeare's Plots

A Study in Dramatic  
Construction

By

William H. Fleming

A.M., *causa honoris*, Princeton

Author of

"A Bibliography of the First Folios"; Editor of "Much Ado  
about Nothing," First and Second "Henry IV," Bank-  
side Edition; "How to Study Shakespeare;" etc.

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"I should have been so poor, so cold, so shortsighted, if I had not learnt in some measure to borrow modestly from the treasures of others, to warm myself at a stranger's fire, and to strengthen my vision by the glasses of art. I have therefore always been ashamed and vexed when I have heard or read anything which found fault with criticism. It ought to stimulate genius, and I flatter myself that I have gained something from it which comes very near to genius."—LESSING, *Dramatic Notes*, No. 101.

"Criticism has been popularly opposed to creation, perhaps because the kind of creation that it attempts is rarely achieved, and so the world forgets that the main business of Criticism, after all, is not to legislate, nor to classify, but to raise the dead. Graves at its command, have waked their sleepers, oped and let them forth. It is by the creative power of this art that the living man is reconstructed from the litter of blurred and fragmentary paper documents that he has left to posterity."—WALTER RALEIGH, *Style*.





## PREFACE

“THE intellectual measure,” wrote Ruskin, “of every man since born, in the domains of creative thought, may be assigned to him according to the degree in which he has been taught by Shakespeare.” In harmony with this opinion is that of James Russell Lowell: “There is as much intellectual training to be got from the study of his [Shakespeare’s] works, as from those of any, I had almost said of all, of the great writers of antiquity.” These men were both critics and educators. With their sentiments I think all teachers and students of literature will agree. The consensus of opinion of the competent, therefore, is that the subject of which this book treats is of superlative importance.

The method of studying a drama which I advocate and exemplify is unique. The system now in vogue is to study the play in detail, Scene by Scene, Act by Act. The result is, the student has no conception of a drama as a Work of Art, the primal quality of which is Unity. Amiel says, “There is a way of killing truth by truths. Under the pretence that we want to study it more in detail, we pulverize the statue.” Likewise the present method of studying a drama makes of it a series of disjointed, fragmentary Scenes and Acts having no organic connection.

“ The less cultivated mind,” says Sir William Hamilton, “ lingers over the parts, the multifarious details; the more educated combines these in unity.” My effort in the study of these Shakespeare plays is to preserve the rhetorical perspective, the balance between the minor parts and the plays as complete and perfect Works of dramatic Art.

The method by which I attain this result is simply resolving the play into its constituent parts, and then following Shakespeare, step by step, in his construction of the drama. The play is divided into the five parts of which every perfectly constructed drama is composed, *viz.*, Introduction, Growth, Climax, Fall, Catastrophe. The Main and Sub-Actions are clearly defined. The various, and numerous, parts of which the play is composed are reduced to order. Out of Variety—Variety of Character, of Passion, of Action—there is developed Unity. The multifarious details are seen to be, not heterogeneous, but homogeneous; not unrelated, but correlated. The connection and harmony of all parts of the play become apparent, and the play becomes æsthetically intelligible. As an ultimate result of this critical study, which I have tried to make both interpretative and vivifying, the reader will have a comprehensive and clear conception of the play as a complete, perfect, organic Art product; and will be enabled to read and study intelligently any drama, ancient or modern, to have a lucid perception, a lively appreciation thereof.

The book is intended for teachers and students, not only of the Shakespearian drama, but also of

the dramatic literature of all ages and nations. Primarily, of course, it deals with the tragedies and comedies of the greatest dramatic genius, the greatest constructive imagination, the race has produced. Who knows them not, to quote Sidney's quaint and felicitous words, "to be the flowers of poetry did never walk into Apollo's garden."

WM. H. FLEMING.





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# Shakespeare's Plots

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## CHAPTER I

### A DRAMA AS A WORK OF ART

ART is founded upon Nature, of which it is the imitation, or, to speak with greater precision, the representation,—*re-presentation*. Conformity to Nature, therefore, is the primary test of perfection in Art. Nature is the criterion by which all works of Art must be judged.

There can, I think, be no dissent from this proposition. Albert Dürer was perhaps the first European artist who studied Nature carefully for its own sake, and with a view to making it a subject of Art. The result of that study is expressed in these words: "Depart not from Nature, neither imagine of thyself to invent aught better, for Art standeth firmly fixed in Nature, and whoso can thence rend her forth, he only possesseth her." <sup>1</sup> Nearly three centuries later Sir Joshua Reynolds wrote:

We can no more form any idea of Beauty superior to Nature than we can form an idea of a sixth sense, or of

<sup>1</sup> Knight, *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, pp. 48, 49.

any other excellence, out of the limits of the human mind. Nothing can be so unphilosophical as a supposition that we can form any idea of Beauty or excellence out of or beyond Nature, which is, and must be, the fountain-head from whence all our ideas must be derived.<sup>1</sup>

This truth forms the sum and substance of *Modern Painters*. Ruskin, speaking of that work, says: "From its first syllable to its last, it declares the perfectness and beauty of the work of God, and tests all work of man by concurrence with, and subjection to, that."<sup>2</sup>

While it is true that Art is based on and must be true to Nature, the inference does not follow that therefore Art is only a representation of Nature. It must be like Nature, but that likeness is only relative. Nature is continually changing, is in flux, is protean. Forms and colors are in process of evolution. Even those arts which have motion—poetry, music—cannot represent Nature more than approximately. Art, therefore, cannot imitate Nature absolutely. Nor should it. The function of Art is not imitation but idealization. The appeal is to the imagination. Of the work of Art we can say, as Theseus did of the acting of the Athenian mechanicals: *The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.*

Art [says Hegel] is no mere imitation or mirroring of Nature. It is a transcendence of Nature, *i. e.*, of the

<sup>1</sup> Knight, *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, p. 182.      <sup>2</sup> *Idem*, p. 220.

actual. Every great artistic work must have Nature for its basis and its starting-point; but in proportion to its greatness it rises from this foundation. It lives and moves, as it were amphibiously, in the two worlds of the actual and the ideal.<sup>1</sup>

The material world is but a mirror which reflects something that transcends itself. It is the expression of the mind and feeling of the Creator. It is "The Garment of Life which the Deity wears."<sup>2</sup> God manifests Himself in Nature. Similarly the artist expresses himself in his work. He, like God, is a creator. His creative work, the art-product, be it a cathedral, a statue, a picture, a symphony, a poem, is the medium through which he reveals his innermost thoughts and feelings. In it he expresses those ideas, moods, visions, which the aspects of Nature awaken in him. "A work of Art is not made up of, or exhausted in, a series of lines, curves, surface-forms, colors, sounds. It is nothing if it does not disclose feeling and thought [mind]."<sup>3</sup> As before said, not imitation but idealization is the supreme function of the artist. "Art," says Bacon, "is man added to Nature." The artist, if great, portrays Nature truthfully, with a subtle, indefinable ideality which is his own. The work of Art is like

. . . the pools that lie  
Under the forest bough  
. . . . .

<sup>1</sup> Knight, *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, p. 72.

<sup>2</sup> *Faust*, Taylor's translation, Scene 1.

<sup>3</sup> Knight, *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, p. 72.

## Shakespeare's Plots

In which the lovely forests grew,  
 As in the upper air,  
 More perfect both in shape and hue  
 Than any spreading there.<sup>1</sup>

The analogy between Nature and Art is not limited to appearances, superficies. It extends much deeper and further, *viz.*, to growth in Nature, composition in Art. In each case the source is not external, but internal. In a plant, a bird, it is the life within which finds expression in growth; in an art-product the source of composition is what Schiller has described as "*der Spieltrieb*, the play-impulse. The animal works when a privation is the motor of its activity, and it plays when the plenitude of force is this motor, when an exuberant life is excited by action."<sup>2</sup> When not hungry the insect flits about in the sunlight, the bird sings,<sup>3</sup> the lion roars. A man when well fed and vigorous is in a plus condition. This superabundance of vitality expresses itself among savages in a crude attempt at decoration, among the highly civilized in Art. In the former it is sensuous, in the latter it is æsthetic play. The source in each is the same.

This activity is independent of any pressure of material need. It is indulged in for its own sake. It is spontaneous. As Herbert Spencer expresses it:

<sup>1</sup> Shelley, *The Recollection*.

<sup>2</sup> Schiller, *Æsthetic Education of Man*, Letter XXVII Cf Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetic*, pp. 281, 294-296.

<sup>3</sup> Socrates says those who think swans sing as death approaches because they bewail death are in error, "and do not reflect that no bird sings when it is hungry, or cold, or afflicted with any other pain," *seq. Phædo*, 35.



The higher but less essential powers, as well as the lower but more essential powers, thus come to have activities that are carried on for the sake of the immediate gratification derived, without reference to ulterior benefits ; and to such higher powers æsthetic products yield those substituted activities as games yield them to various lower powers.<sup>1</sup>

In this respect the activity which manifests itself in the play of the higher animal, a primitive man, a savage, is similar in nature to that exercised by the man of culture in the production of the greatest work of Art. The difference is not one of essence, but of degree. The play-impulse has developed into the art-impulse.

Further, the play-impulse and the art-impulse are similar in that both are imitative.<sup>2</sup> The play-impulse finds expression among animals in such gambols as simulate its serious activities, *e. g.*, search for prey ; among savages, in games which imitate those activities which are necessitated by the struggle for existence, or by warfare, *e. g.*, the mimic chase or mimic fighting. " All simple, active games," says James,

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, p. 630

For a detailed statement of the various theories as to the Origin of Art, *cf.* Gayley and Scott, *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism*, vol. i., pp. 173-176.

<sup>2</sup> " To imitate, then, is instinctive in man. By this he is distinguished from other animals that he is, of all, the most imitative. and through this instinct receives his earliest education."—Aristotle. *Poetics*, part i., section v.

" The dramatic impulse. the tendency to pretend one is some one else, contains this pleasure of mimicry as one of its elements." —James, *Psychology*, vol. ii., p. 409.

"are attempts to gain the excitement yielded by certain primitive instincts, through feigning that the occasions for their exercise are there."<sup>1</sup> The art-impulse manifests itself in an imitative delineation of the beautiful in Nature.

Between the two, however, there is one well-defined difference. Play does not manifest itself in Art until there is in it an element of order. Hence there is no Art among animals. The caper of the savage becomes a dance only when there is rhythm, the shout a song only when there is melody. "The beautiful cannot have its origin in tumult, in the simultaneous reverberation of a crowd of sounds in which the ear can distinguish no measure or harmony, nor can the plastic arts discover it in the mere wanton medley of colors and of lines."<sup>2</sup>

Order is an essential quality of the work of Art. It is the presence of this quality which distinguishes the expression of the play-impulse of the man of culture from that of the animal or the savage.

To recapitulate: man possesses a life which is sensual and is conditioned by material needs. Co-existing therewith he possesses a life which is emotional, spiritual. Each manifests itself at times in action. This action possesses the two qualities, spontaneousness, imitativeness. In the less evolved the sensuous, this action is play. In the highly evolved, the intellectual and spiritual, this action is Art.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology*, vol. ii., pp. 427. 428. Cf. Baldwin, *The Story of the Mind*, pp. 43-51.

<sup>2</sup> M. Auguste Laugel, *L'Optique et les Arts*.

Art, then, being based upon Nature, its source being an impulse common to animals and men, and the work of the artist being in essence or character similar to that of the Creator, each being the expression of thought, feeling, through a material medium which appeals either to the eye or ear, it necessarily follows that the methods followed by the artist must be similar to those followed by God in creation. The laws which regulate the production of a work of Art are similar to those which govern the growth of a flower, a tree, a bird, an animal, a man. The artist's model, therefore, is Nature and her processes. Nature must be the pattern for all his forms of hue, or tone, or curve. The architect for his shapes and forms, his outlines and exquisite grace of curve, imitates, with more or less modification, those which are everywhere visible in the material world. The painter for his colors, and the way they should be combined, imitates those found in the flowers, the opal, the morning and evening clouds before or after rain. The musician, in his quest of beauty born of sound for his melody and harmony, imitates the sounds of wind and ocean, the singing of birds, the human voice.

The highest product of creation is man. He, both physically, intellectually, spiritually, is the ideal art-form. "The human form," said Goethe, "is the *Alpha* and *Omega* of all known things."<sup>1</sup> There are certain latent affinities between the aspects of nature and human thought and emotion. In fact, the analogy between the mind and feelings of man

<sup>1</sup> *Faust*, Taylor's translation, notes, p. 279.

and the objects in the external world is so close that the latter are beautiful only to the degree that they express qualities that are human.

It is [says Jouffroy] in proportion as objects recognized as beautiful resemble man, or in so far as they mirror our humanity, that they are to that extent deemed more beautiful by us. It is the grace of the lily, the tenderness of the color of the rose, the peace of the sky at sunset, that are the source of their charm; but grace, tenderness, and peace are human characteristics.<sup>1</sup>

Every great work of Art, therefore, must conform in all particulars to man. Only to the degree that it expresses qualities which are peculiarly human, which are intellectual, emotional, spiritual, does it manifest the highest beauty.

Of all men who have lived probably no one possessed a more artistic sense, united with a more perfect artistic technique, than William Shakespeare. Describing the function of his own art, he says: *The purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold as 't were the mirror up to nature; and to do so with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. To essay that, to endeavor to improve on Nature, is wasteful and ridiculous excess.* It is simply attempting

to paint the lily,  
To throw a perfume on the violet,  
To smooth the ice, or add another hue  
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light  
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish.

<sup>1</sup> Knight, *Philosophy of the Beautiful*, p. 115.

Nature, both in its appearances and processes, is the model of Art. Nothing unnatural is beautiful. Only to the degree in which Art conforms to Nature is it enduring, perfect.<sup>1</sup>

In studying Art, therefore, the best method is one similar to that pursued by scientists in the investigation of Nature, *viz.*, Classification. This is literally the making of classes. Its basis is the recognition of the Unity underlying Variety in Nature. Its method is the grouping of various species under the proper genera, families, orders, classes. Herbert Spencer, in the essay on the "Classification of the Sciences," defines it as follows:

A true classification includes in each class those objects which have more characteristics in common with one another than any of them have in common with any object excluded from the class. Further, the characteristics possessed in common by the colligated objects,—and not possessed by other objects, are more radical than

<sup>1</sup> "When the poet broods over his half-formed creation, and fashions it with divine ingenuity, and gives it shapeliness and completion of detail, and the lustre of finished workmanship, he does not forsake his instincts, but is obedient to them; he does not remove from nature into a laboratory of art, but is the close companion of nature. The vital spontaneous movement of the faculties, far from ceasing, still goes on like 'the flight of the grey-gull over the bay,' while the poet seeks after order, proportion, comeliness, melody—in a word, beauty; or rather. . . . does not seek but is sought—the perfect form, preconceived but unattained, drawing the artist towards itself with an invincible attraction. An artist who does not yield to the desire for perfect order and beauty of form, instead of coming closer to nature is really forsaking nature, and doing violence to a genuine artistic instinct."—Dowden, *Studies in Literature*, p. 486.

any characteristics possessed in common with other objects—involve more numerous dependent characteristics

In other words, characteristics which objects in the same class have in common must be greater in number and in degree than those which they have in common with objects outside of this class.

The object of classification is clear. We understand things if we can comprehend them; that is to say, if we can grasp and hold together single facts, connect isolated impressions, distinguish between what is essential and what is merely accidental, and thus predicate the general of the individual, and class the individual under the general. This is the secret of all scientific knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Classification is simply a recognition of the likeness or unlikeness of certain objects. It underlies not only Nature, but also Language, Reasoning, Art. In studying the latter, as the former, therefore, the first step is to classify. The scientist classifies or puts together certain kinds of rocks, plants, animals, men. This is the method pursued by the Creator in His works.<sup>2</sup> Rocks that are alike are grouped in the same mountain ranges, or at the bottom of the same streams; leaves that are alike grow on the same tree or similar kinds of trees; feathers or hair that are alike grow on the same birds or beasts; men that are alike are placed in the same climate, country, family, race. The Creator's method is in strict accord with Classification, putting like with like, and men have progressed in

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, *The Science of Language*. Lecture I.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Raymond, *Genesis of Art-Form*. chap. i.



knowledge of Nature only to the degree in which they have pursued a similar method, and have classified. This truth applies with equal force to the study of Art.

The recognition of this fact is neither universal nor forceful. Hence this plea for its application to the drama, and particularly the Shakespearian drama. While this is not the only method by which a play can be studied properly, it is *facile princeps*; in fact, it is the one which is absolutely necessary in order to appreciate a play as a work of Art. It is the only one by means of which the study of the Shakespearian drama can be taken out of the domain of chaos, where it now is, and be made scientific. It reveals the laws of dramatic construction, and thereby does for a play what the laws discovered by Kepler and Newton did for the study of astronomy. The methods usually pursued are necessary, and yield rich fruit. No one can make any pretensions to Shakespearian scholarship unless he is thoroughly familiar with them. I therefore do not disparage them. At the same time they are incomplete and defective, both in method and result. They cause too minute attention to details.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The aim in expounding a great poem should be, not to discover an endless variety of meanings, often contradictory, but whatever it has of great and perennial significance; for such it must have, or it would long ago have ceased to be living and operative; would long ago have taken refuge in the Chartreuse of great libraries, dumb thenceforth to all mankind. We do not mean to say that this minute exegesis is useless or unpraiseworthy, but only that it should be subsidiary to the larger way."—Lowell, *Among My Books*, pp. 44, 45.

This begets a mental short-sightedness which is always fatal to the appreciation of any artistic masterpiece as a whole.<sup>1</sup> In order to apprehend the play as an organic work of Art, to perceive the Unity which underlies the Variety, it must be studied according to the methods of Classification. This method is simply resolving the play into its constituent parts, separating like from unlike and joining like with like. To descend to particulars, the play must first be divided into the five parts of which a perfect drama is composed, *viz.*, Introduction, Growth, Climax, Fall, Catastrophe. This analysis must be further applied to the Action of the drama. The Main Action must be clearly defined from the Sub-Actions. All the factors forming the Main Action must be classified; so also must those forming one or other of the different Sub-Actions. Then the Plot which binds these divisions, actions, together, and makes the play an organic whole, must be traced. The result is, the parts of the play which are various and numerous are reduced to Order. Out of Variety, Variety of Character, of Passion, of Action, there is developed Unity. The multifarious details are seen to be, not heterogeneous, but homogeneous; not unrelated, but correlated. The connection and harmony of all parts of the play become apparent. The result is, the play becomes æsthetically intelligible. As an ultimate result of this method of study, one will have a com-

<sup>1</sup> "There is a way of killing truth by truths. Under the pretense that we want to study it more in detail we pulverize the statue."  
—Amiel.

prehensive and clear conception of the play as a complete, perfect, organic art-product.<sup>1</sup> To be more specific, the following will be some of the most important results of this method of study:

I.—The law of art-composition will become manifest. The evolution of a drama, like movement, growth, in Nature is in strict accordance with laws. The movement of the heavenly bodies is not more perfectly harmonious with the laws of gravitation, or the growth of an organism is not more in accord with its structure and environment, than is the evolution of a drama in harmony with the laws of art-composition. This fact is made apparent by the application of the scientific method to the study of the drama. This method is both analytic and synthetic. It is unbuilding and also rebuilding. It is both deductive and inductive. After the play has been reduced to its component factors and they are classified, then they are again united and the play is reconstructed. In the latter operation the laws of composition become manifest. As a result of this the following qualities, which are inherent in products of Nature, and therefore must of necessity be inherent in every work of Art, become manifest<sup>2</sup>: Unity, Variety, Complexity, Order, Comparison, Contrast, Complement, Principality, Subordination, Balance. Derived from these are: Grouping, Organic Form, Symmetry. This statement of attributes

<sup>1</sup> Hegel expresses this thought as applied to logic, in his doctrine of the "Notion," as *Begriff* is commonly translated. Cf. his *Logic*, vol. iii. ; also his *Encyclopedia of the Sciences*, p. 160, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Raymond, *Genesis of Art-Form*, p. 131.

of a work of Art is not exhaustive. It, however, mentions the principal ones. The study of a drama after the method of Classification will, as it progresses, reveal the existence therein of these properties; and also the underlying laws of composition in accordance with which the artist has constructed his play.

✓ II. —It makes apparent the fact that the primary element in a Shakespearian drama is not Characterization but Plot. As to the perfection of Shakespeare's Characters there can be no uncertainty. All competent to form an opinion will agree with Dr. Johnson<sup>1</sup>: "They are the genuine progeny of common humanity." But while true to Nature they are, as Gervinus says: "Not Nature only without the assistance of Art. They are neither mere abstractions and ideals, nor common chance personifications, such as life brings indifferently before us, but they stand in the free, true, real artistic medium between both." ✓ But the opinion expressed by Gervinus, which is so common as to be almost universal, "that Shakespeare's characters have always been his greatest glory,"<sup>2</sup> is erroneous. ✓ Scholars have been led into making this error by two causes; one, the fact that Shakespeare's great advance beyond the Greek drama is the perfection ✓ of his character-drawing; the other and principal ✓ one, that the plays are studied almost wholly from the æsthetic standpoint. In both cases the attention is directed primarily to the Characters, and

<sup>1</sup> Preface to his edition of *Shakespeare's Plays*.

<sup>2</sup> *Shakespeare Commentaries*, p. 849.

secondarily to the Plot. The great poets of the world have been before all else artists. In their work it is not the intellectual, the æsthetical which is supreme. It is the art. When the construction of the dramas is critically studied the fact becomes evident that their transcendent greatness is the Plot.

Plot in a drama is simply design. It is the *modus operandi* by which the artist out of a chaos of characters, actions, passions, evolves order. This order is not that of mechanical regularity. It is far deeper and more vital. It is that of a living organism. It is, as previously remarked, absent in the play of the savage. It is present in the æsthetic play of the artist. It is the primal element in all art-work. After enumerating the elements of tragedy, Aristotle says: "The most important of these elements is the composition of the incidents (the plot or fable). For tragedy is a representation (imitation) not of men and women, but of action and life." Still again he says:

If you string together a set of speeches expressive of character, and well finished in point of diction and thought, you will not produce the essential tragic effect nearly so well as with a play, which, however deficient in these respects, yet has a plot and artistically constructed incidents.

Goethe, who spoke out of his own experience as an artist, expresses a similar opinion: "What distinguishes the artist from the amateur is *architectoniké* in the highest sense; that power of execution which creates, forms, and constitutes; not the profoundness of



single thoughts, not the richness of imagery, not the abundance of illustration." "Art," says Ruskin, "is human labor regulated by human design and this design, or evidence of active intellect in choice and arrangement, is the essential part of the work."<sup>1</sup> In every great poem, not excepting the most spontaneous and impassioned, there is a conscious or unconscious basis of intellectual architectonics.

The word *Art* is derived from the Latin *ars*, which means "skill in joining together, combining." That in turn is derived from the Greek *aro*, the definition of which is "to join, pin together, fit, fasten." The main object in art-composition is to reduce the factors which may be numerous and various to unity and order for the purpose of making them æsthetically intelligible. This is the function of Plot. It is only when a play is studied critically from the standpoint of its construction that the design or Plot is recognized as the primary and essential quality of the drama.

It is both erroneous and absurd to suppose that Shakespeare was ignorant of the supreme importance of Plot. Lowell writes: "It is singular that the man whose works show him to have meditated deeply on whatever interests human thought should have been supposed never to have given his mind to the processes of his own craft."<sup>2</sup> The converse

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Art*, Brantwood Edition, p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> *The Old English Dramatists*, p. 111; cf. also Lowell, *Among My Books*, pp. 189-201; *Literary Essays*, vol. ii., p. 223, foot-note; Gosse, *Modern English Literature*, pp. 100-109; Johnson, *Elements of Literary Criticism*, pp. 24, 25; Saintsbury, *History of Elizabethan Literature*, pp. 169, 170.

is true. It is reasonable to believe that Shakespeare did recognize the fact that Plot is the primal element in a drama. The perfection of his own plots proves this. His plays, with the exception of some written in his tentative, his playwright period, are the perfection of symmetry; they balance around a common centre. "The key to every man is his thought."<sup>1</sup> The key to every drama is the Plot, which is simply the poet's originating, constructing thought. The recognition of this fact is one fruit of the study of the plays according to the method here advocated.

III.—The study of a drama after this manner is similar, in every stage, to Shakespeare's method of constructing it. The student is thereby brought into intellectual and imaginative sympathy with the dramatist. As a consequence he is able to judge accurately, to appreciate fully, the perfection and beauty of the drama. Shakespeare's method was first analytic, then synthetic. He analyzed a romance or history, selecting some, rejecting other incidents. Then, using those selected, and adding to them others of his own invention, out of them, as raw material, he created a drama. This operation is followed, step by step, by the student. The details are seen to be perfect in themselves. Further, that each one is essential, for in a perfect drama there is no lay figure, not a needless word or action. Then, passing from specials to generals, the growth of each division of the drama is traced. Finally the drama is perceived to be organic. Each and every

<sup>1</sup> Emerson, *Circles*.



part is seen to be vital, and to be in living connection with every other part, and all together constitute a perfect work of dramatic art.

By this method of study the scholar follows the natural order of intellectual growth, which is from the concrete to the abstract. He rises, like Shakespeare himself, to the region of the imagination, and

. . . . . apprehends  
More than cool reason ever comprehends.

While there is, as Coleridge has stated,<sup>1</sup> an antithesis between Science and Poetry, this antithesis is not great in degree or inherent in character. Essentially, Science and Poetry are alike, both being expressions of truth. As in character, so in method are they similar. "The highest reach of science," says Matthew Arnold, "is, we may say, an inventive power, a faculty of divination akin to the highest power exercised in poetry."<sup>2</sup> And again, "without poetry our science will appear incomplete. . . . For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry 'the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science.'"<sup>3</sup> The critical study, therefore, of Poetry as of Science is the joint work of reason and of imagination; of the imaginative reason. This is true of Science. "Bounded and conditioned by co-operant reason, imagination becomes the mightiest instrument of the physical dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Bohn's edition, p. 183, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Essays in Criticism*, first series, pp. 50, 51.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, second series, pp. 2, 3.

coverer," says Tyndall.<sup>1</sup> The scientific method of studying the Shakespearian drama equally demands the use both of reason and imagination. It is by means of both that *the still and mental parts* of the drama, the hidden but vital connection of all the factors in the play, and the artistic result of that connection, are perceived. By means of both the student apprehends not only what is really in the play, but also what is potentially there. The production of that beauty, both that which is real and that which is potential, and the perception of it as well, are the result of the concurrent action of a highly trained intellect and a most refined and disciplined imagination. The method of study here advocated necessitates the exercise of both. Hence it is in accord with Shakespeare's method of construction, and, better than any other, will enable the student to appreciate the Shakespeare plays.

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Use of the Imagination.*

## CHAPTER II

### A DRAMA : ITS NATURE ; THE LAWS OF ITS CONSTRUCTION

#### ITS NATURE

A DRAMA is “ an imitation of one entire, great, and probable action, not told but represented, which, by moving in us fear and pity, is conducive to the purging of those two passions in our minds.” Such is Aristotle’s<sup>1</sup> definition of tragedy, as translated by Dryden.<sup>2</sup>

Although so old, and referring primarily to the

<sup>1</sup> *Poetics*, part ii., section ii.

<sup>2</sup> *The Grounds of Criticism in Tragedy*.

Other translations of this citation from Aristotle are :

“ Tragedy, then, is an imitation of some action that is important, entire, and of a proper magnitude—by language embellished and rendered pleasurable, but by different means in different parts—in the way, not of narration, but of action—effecting, through pity and terror, the correction and refinement of such passions.”—Twining, vol. i., p. 116.

“ Tragedy is a representation [*lit.* imitation] of an action noble and complete in itself, and of appreciable magnitude, in language of special fascination, using different kinds of utterance in the different parts, given through performers, and not by means of narration, and producing, by [the stimulation of] pity and fear, the alleviating discharge of emotions of that nature.”—Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetic*, p. 64.

*Cf.*, also, Gayley and Scott, *Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism*, vol. i.

Greek drama, this definition of Aristotle, with some slight modifications, is substantially true of the Shakespearian and modern drama.

One of those modifications relates to the subject of the drama, which, Aristotle says, is “*one entire . . . action.*” He restricted a drama to the imitation of one action, occurring in one place, on one day. This is the Greek law of Unity. Shakespeare perceived that this was neither natural nor artistic. In the physical world time and change are essential elements of evolution. The same is true of the growth and development of a man, intellectually, emotionally, ethically. In each of his dramas, therefore, Shakespeare has depicted numerous actions, occurring frequently in widely separated places, at many different times. He does, however, preserve Unity. These multiform and apparently, but not really, inharmonious elements are fused by the poet into one æsthetic whole.

The law of Unity when applied to the Shakespearian and modern drama implies in it the existence of three specific properties :

I — One Main Action. There may be several Sub-Actions, but there must be one, and only one, Main Action.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Now the poet is to aim at one great and complete action, to the carrying out of which all things in his play, even the very obstacles, are to be subservient ; and the reason of this is evident. For two actions equally laboured and driven on by the writer, would destroy the unity of the poem ; it would be no longer one play, but two ; not but what there may be many actions in a play ; but they must all be subservient to the great one : *seq.*”—Dryden.  
*Essay on Dramatic Poesy.*

✓ II.—One hero or one heroine. There must not be more than one of either. Neither must there be both.

To the latter dictum there is an exception. Sometimes the action of a drama is the result of the joint conduct of a hero and a heroine. In such a case the hero and heroine are a dramatic unit. They are like a binary star, two stars so closely situated, revolving together around a common centre of gravity, that they emit one light; or like two streams which join and together form a river. So in a drama sometimes there are a hero and a heroine who are so intimately related, who act in such perfect unison, that the action of the drama is the result of their joint conduct. Examples of such a drama are *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*. With this exception a drama must have one hero or one heroine, but not both.

✓ III.—A drama must portray one great passion. As human conduct is very complex, is the expression of many feelings, thoughts, purposes, there is in a drama, oftentimes, the portrayal of several passions. One of these, and only one, must be dominant. All others must be secondary, subdominant. This dominant passion may be jealousy, or, more properly, outraged love, as in *Othello*; ambition, as in *Macbeth*; patriotism, although misguided, as in *Julius Cæsar*; love, as in *Romeo and Juliet*. There must be one, and only one dominant passion which sways and controls the *dramatis personæ*.

Such is the law of Unity when applied to the Shakespearian and modern drama.

Again, Aristotle says, "not told but represented."

This goes to the very heart of the subject, and describes, very briefly, but with unerring accuracy, the nature of a drama, whether it be ancient or modern.

The term "drama" is a Greek word, derived from the verb *drao*, which means "to do, be doing, accomplish, fulfil." It literally means something done, a performance. A drama is the poetry of conduct. Its primary and essential quality is *action*. It is not simply a narrative of events. If it were it would be an epic. Nor is it only an expression of emotion, passion. If it were it would be a lyric. "What is that which we call dramatic?" asks James Russell Lowell. He answers: "In the concrete, it is that which is more vivid if represented than described, and which would lose if merely narrated."<sup>1</sup>

That which differentiates a drama from an epic or a lyric, in fact from every other form of literature, is that in it the poet expresses his thought, emotion, not so much by words as by action. The men and women who are the medium by which the poet expresses himself appear before us living, speaking, acting. The theme of the drama is man in action. That action is a collision between the hero and the society in which he lives, or between him and the great moral laws which govern the universe.

A drama is a representation—*re-presentation*—of an action, its causes, its progress, its consequences; as it reveals and affects the doer, and also others within the scope of its influence.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Old English Dramatists*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lewes, *Problems of Life and Mind*, vol. ii., pp. 116-118.



## LAWS OF CONSTRUCTION

A drama, like a house, is builded. What are the laws of its construction ?

The laws which govern the construction of a drama are not empirical, capricious. They are not the dictum of any man.<sup>1</sup> Like the laws which govern the material world, the motion of a star, the growth of a flower, a bird, they are natural. They inhere in the nature of a drama, and in the nature of the human mind which creates the drama, and which understands and appreciates it when it is read or acted. They are, as Pope says:

Those rules of old discover'd, not devised,  
Are Nature still, but Nature methodiz'd.

The artist does not create his materials. For these he goes to the great storehouse, Nature. The architect, sculptor, obtain marble from the quarry, out of which the former creates a cathedral, the latter a statue. The painter uses pigments with which he portrays the varying moods of landscape, ocean, man. The musician who creates beauty born of sound imitates the tones of winds, waters, the singing of birds, the sob of the child, the shout of the man.<sup>2</sup> The dramatic poet portrays the experiences of men as recorded in histories, legends,

<sup>1</sup> "A true art critic deduces no rules from his individual taste, but has formed his taste from rules necessitated by the nature of his subject."—Lessing, *Dramatic Notes*, No. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Music, however, is less imitative than the other arts. Cf. Knight, *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, part ii., p. 137, seq.



stories. The originality of the artist is not in the creation of the materials he uses, but in the selection and use made of them.

To apply this fact to a drama, and to Shakespeare as an example of dramatists, with the possible exception of three plays, *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, Shakespeare did not invent the stories he dramatized. His plays belong to the romantic drama. Sciolists have therefore said he was not original. Is this opinion well founded? What is originality in art-production? "But, in general," is the opinion on this subject of the great poet of the Restoration, "the employment of a poet is like that of a curious gunsmith, or watchmaker; the iron or silver is not his own; but they are the least part of that which gives the value; the price lies wholly in the workmanship."<sup>1</sup> Originality "may be defined," says Newman, "as the power of abstracting for one's self, and is in thought what strength of mind is in action."<sup>2</sup> Walter Savage Landor says: "Creative-ness may work upon old materials; a new world may spring from an old one."<sup>3</sup> With this dictum Morley concurs: "As high a degree of originality may be shown in transformation as in invention, as Molière and Shakespeare have proved in the region of dramatic art."<sup>4</sup> In his *Essay on Walton*, Lowell asserts that Walton did not open new paths to thought or new vistas to imagination, but that he

<sup>1</sup> Dryden. Preface to *An Evening's Love*.

<sup>2</sup> On Aristotle's *Poetics*.

<sup>3</sup> *Selections*, by Colvin, p. 273.

<sup>4</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. iii., p. 341.

suffused whatever he wrote with his own individuality. " This constitutes literary originality. Whatever entered his mind or memory came forth again plus Izaak Walton." On this subject nothing more forceful has been written than the words of Professor Royce :

As a fact, originality and imitation are not in the least opposed, but are, in healthy cases, absolutely correlative and inseparable processes, so that you cannot be truly original in any direction unless you imitate, and cannot imitate effectively, worthily, admirably, unless you imitate in original fashions. The greatest thinker, artist, or prophet is merely a man who imitates inimitably something in the highest degree worthy of his imitation.<sup>1</sup>

The dramatist does not invent all of the incidents used in his plays. Æschylus said his dramas were but " dry scraps from the great banquets of Homer." The sculptor does not invent his subject, *e. g.*, Laocoön; nor does the painter, *e. g.*, The Madonna. An enormous receptive and assimilative power is a characteristic of genius. As the life within the seed appropriates nourishment from the earth, light, atmosphere, and grows into a lovely flower, so Shakespeare appropriated stories, histories, old plays, and by his creative genius produced from them his dramas. To speak metaphorically, the base metal he found in Plutarch, Boccaccio, Holinshed, the *Gesta Romanorum*, is transmuted by him into the pure gold of his Roman plays, his delightful comedies, his great tragedies. And, so doing, he, like other artists, is original.

<sup>1</sup> *The Century Magazine*, May, 1894, p. 145.

Each is a creator. Each, out of material which he has borrowed, creates the work of Art, putting into it his own thoughts, emotions, life. Each

Makes new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,  
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:  
To bring the invisible full into play.<sup>1</sup>

In doing this Shakespeare exercised the primal faculty of the artist, *viz.*, the power of artistic selection. It is this faculty which enables the dramatist to perceive the capabilities of his material; to select those incidents, those characters, which are suitable to representation on the stage.

Only certain actions, certain characters, admit of dramatic treatment. Not only the life, but also the form of a poem, is contained in the subject-matter. The form in which a poem is written is to the thought and emotion of the poem, to its life, what a man's body is to his mind and spirit. When Milton began to write *Paradise Lost* he put it in the dramatic form as a Miracle Play. He modelled it after the Greek drama, with a chorus. He wrote part of the poem in this form. Finally, however, as the result of long meditation and fresh inspiration, he was convinced his subject was not dramatic, but epic. He therefore changed the form of his poem, and made it not a drama, but an epic.

A history, ballad, poem, story, to be dramatized must possess the following qualities:

I.—It must have a theme, *e. g.*, ambition, love.

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *Old Pictures in Florence*.

II.—It must be such as can be imitated by action, for a drama is imitation by means of action.

III.—It must be probable.

IV.—It must be organic; *i. e.*, every detail, every incident must be in vital connection with the Main Action.

V.—The characters must be typical.

Having selected his subject the dramatist proceeds to outline his Plot or scheme of action.

Aristotle considered Plot the supreme element in tragedy. He calls it "the final aim," "the soul," "the central principle" of tragedy. Plot is design. It is the skilful arrangement of incidents, of actions, by means of which the thoughts and emotions of the *dramatis personæ* are expressed, and those of the spectators are appealed to. The architect takes the blocks of white marble, and out of them, by means of his plan or design, which is in strict accordance with the laws of beauty, constructs the grand cathedral. Likewise the dramatist takes individual actions, and by skilful use of them, by means of Plot or design, constructs the great drama. The beauty, the grandeur, of the cathedral is not in the marble, but in the plan; that of a drama is not in the incidents, but in the Plot, by means of which they are artistically fused.

In outlining his Plot the poet divides his drama into five principal parts, which in the modern drama are called Acts:

Protasis	Introduction	Act I
Epitasis	Growth	" II
Peripeteia	Climax	" III

Katabasis	Fall	Act IV
Katastrophy	Catastrophe	“ V.”

Why five Acts ? Why not three or four, or more or less ? Is this division of a drama into five parts or Acts optional with the dramatist, or is it inherent in the nature of a drama ? It is essential, fundamental.

From the time of the Greeks to the present, artists have recognized the fact that Balance and Symmetry are secured by the use of an odd number of factors in an art-product, *e. g.*, in a building, three or five stories<sup>2</sup>; in a picture, a group of an odd number of figures, or an uneven number of groups.<sup>3</sup> This canon of Art is applicable to a drama. Complement and Balance demand that there should be in a play an unequal number of Acts.

Further, that that number be five is necessitated by, and in strict accord with, a psychologic law. A drama is an imitation, by means of representation, of an action. A drama, therefore, must in its nature be like the action of a man, or a body of men. All life, that of plants, of animals, of men, of nations, naturally divides itself into five stages—birth, rise, culmination, decline, fall. Every action consists of five parts—Cause, Growth, Height, Consequence, Close. Based on this analysis, and in perfect harmony therewith, a drama, when resolved into its constituent parts, has five divisions. In its quintuple

<sup>1</sup> The division of Shakespeare's plays, as we have them, into Acts and Scenes being so imperfect, the Acts are not in every case co-terminous with the above five parts.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, chap. iv., sec. xxix.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *The Art of Painting*, note xxxix.; cf. also Raymond, *Genesis of Art-Form*, chaps. iii.-v.

character, therefore, a drama is a perfect analogue of an action. If the division of the drama into Acts is perfect, between each one of them and each one of the five divisions of an action there is a correspondence which is essential, structural. That which in an action is the Cause, is in a drama the Introduction; likewise the Close in the former corresponds to the Catastrophe in the latter. The same is true of the three other divisions of actions and dramas.

The Greek sense of proportion, of ideal form in Art, was well-nigh perfect. Aristotle divided a drama into:

*Protasis*.—Entrance. That which is put forward.

*Epitasis*.—A stretching. That part of a play in which the Plot thickens.

*Peripeteia*.—A turning right about. The sudden reversal of circumstances on which the Plot in a drama hinges.

*Katabasis*.—A going down.

*Katastrophy*.—A turning up and down. An overthrowing.

Horace, in his *Ars Poetica*, says:

If you would have your play deserve success,  
Give it five Acts complete, nor more, nor less.

The opinions of Aristotle and Horace, the greatest of the ancient critics, have been accepted by Lessing, the greatest of modern dramatic critics.<sup>1</sup>

Shakespeare possessed the greatest constructive imagination of any man that ever lived. He is the greatest dramatic genius the race has produced. He accepted this canon of dramatic art. His plays

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (Hamburg Dramaturgy).



as published in Folio I. are, in most cases, divided into five Acts. In no play are there more than five Acts; in some few plays there are less; *II. and III. Henry VI., Troilus and Cressida, Romeo and Juliet, Timon of Athens, Antony and Cleopatra* have *Actus Primus* only. *Hamlet* has *Actus Primus* and *Actus Secundus* only. *Taming of the Shrew* has four Acts only, *Actus Secundus* being omitted. *Love's Labour's Lost* and *King John* have each five Acts, but in each play there are two *Actus Quartus* and no *Actus Quintus*. The mistakes made in the division of these plays into Acts are like Falstaff's lies, gross as a mountain, open, palpable. So evident is this, that we can infer with certainty that that division was not made by Shakespeare; further, that it was not in accordance either with his construction or his manuscript. I believe that Shakespeare wrote every play in five Acts. These variations are manifestly mistakes made by the editors and printers of the first Folio.<sup>1</sup>

There are one-Act plays. These are miniature dramas. There are also plays which have two or three or four Acts. Such are imperfect. Every drama which is properly constructed has five parts,—Introduction, Growth, Climax, Fall, Catastrophe,—each one of which is coterminous with an Act.

The separation or disjunction of the Acts, so far as the action of the drama is concerned, is not real, but imaginary. The time supposed to elapse between the Acts is simply a period of repose, a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my monograph, "The Division of the Plays into Acts," *Werner's Magazine*, April, 1894, p. 137, seq.

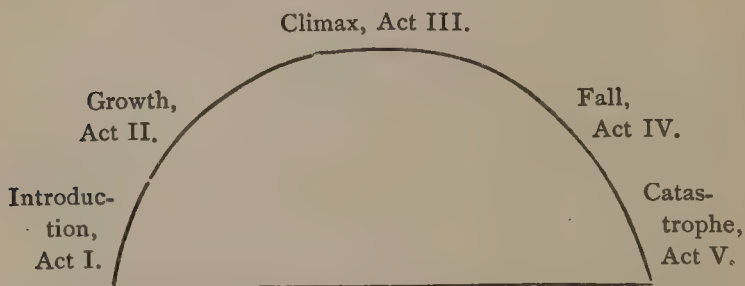


resting-place for the mind and emotions of the spectator. The curtain falls. The action temporarily stops. The tension on the thought and feelings of the spectator is for a time relieved. A drama is not a series of five disconnected Acts, each being subdivided into disjointed and fragmentary Scenes. It is an organic whole. The different Scenes and Acts must be interdependent like links in a chain, stones in an arch, or like the different parts of the human body, head, trunk, limbs—separate parts, having separate functions, yet all in vital union with the heart, and with each other, and all together constituting a human being.

In a drama each Act, each Scene, must follow the preceding one naturally, and must lead naturally to those which follow. Each Act, each Scene must also follow the preceding one necessarily, and must lead inevitably to those which follow. There must be all through the drama a note of the inevitable.

#### FORM OF A DRAMA

A drama is written, not in the form of a triangle, but in that of an arch:



The reason of this is, the curve is the line of beauty.

Beauty has both a physical and a psychical basis. Sights, sounds, are only beautiful when they harmonize so perfectly with the nerves of vision or hearing that they do not strain or jar them. A perfectly round stone dropped into a pool of water causes a series of round waves which are beautiful. On the other hand, if the stone is angular, jagged, the waves are irregular, therefore not beautiful. If a perfectly constructed bell is struck with a hammer, there result sound-waves which are circular, undulatory, and, therefore, beautiful. If the bell is cracked, the sound-waves are not circular,—are therefore inharmonious. The reason is, in the one case, the waves of water, of sound, do not strain or jar, but, on the contrary, are harmonious with, the nerves of vision, of hearing. In the other case it is the reverse. The ideal art figure is the human body. In it there are no angles. Such is the physical basis of beauty.

Beauty has also a psychical basis. Any work of art to be beautiful must be in harmony with the intellectual, emotional, ethical nature of man. Hence a work of art of the first order, being in harmony with the psychical nature of man, always causes delight.<sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

The Introduction includes all that part of the drama which precedes the beginning of the action.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Raymond, *Art in Theory*, p. 161, *seq.*, also Appendix; Brown, *The Fine Arts*, p. 189, *seq.*; Grant Allen, *The Color Sense*, p. 19, *seq.*, also *Physiological Æsthetics*, p. 143, *seq.*; Sully, *The Human Mind*, p. 117, *seq.*; Lowell, essay, *Rousseau and the Sentimentalists*.

It is not a part of the action itself. It is introductory to that.

Sometimes the Introduction is an action, *e. g.*, *Romeo and Juliet*, but it is not the action of the drama. It precedes that, and is the cause thereof. The action of *Romeo and Juliet* begins when Romeo, Mercutio, and their friends start to go to the ball at the Capulets'. The quarrel between the servants, retainers, members, of the rival houses of Montagu and Capulet, with which the play begins, precedes that, and its dramatic purpose is to prepare for and introduce the action of the drama.

The function of the Introduction is threefold :

I.—In it the dramatist must give the spectators all necessary information as to the causes of the action. Events which have occurred antecedent to the action of the drama, and have been the cause of it, must be narrated in the Introduction. Lacking this information the spectator cannot have an intelligent and vivid comprehension of the action itself, which follows.

An example of this is the Introduction to the *Merchant of Venice* (I., 1, 2). In Scene 1, Bassanio gives a detailed description of Portia, of his love for her, of his desire to woo her. In Scene 2 Portia describes her lovers, amongst whom is Bassanio.

In *Hamlet* (I., 5) the Ghost tells Hamlet of the murder, how, when, where, it was committed.

Sometimes this information is conveyed to the spectators by means of a Prologue. Shakespeare generally uses this method in his historical plays.

In the Introduction most generally, though not

always, all of the principal characters appear. If they are not brought forward in person a reference is made to them, a description is given of them by one of the other actors. By this means the *dramatis personæ* quickly and vividly reveal their salient traits, and the spectators become acquainted with them.

II.—Not only must the spectator's intelligence be appealed to in the Introduction, his feelings also must be touched, excited. The dramatist must strike the chord of emotion that is to vibrate through the play, like the motif in a symphony.

The *Merchant of Venice* is a comedy with a tragic undertone. Shakespeare in the Introduction gives expression to both the serious, sombre, and the happy. Antonio, who has a presentiment of coming trouble, is sad. Grouped around him are Salario, Salanio, Gratiano, Lorenzo, Bassanio, the young gallants of Venice. They are jolly, careless, happy. They attempt to diagnose Antonio's sadness, and the result is:

Then let us say you 're sad  
Because you are not merry; and 't were as easy  
For you to laugh and leap, and say you 're merry  
Because you are not sad.

In the second Scene Portia appears, *awearied of this great world*. She then gives an amusing description of her wooers.

Shakespeare, in these opening Scenes, touches the emotional chords of the merry and the sad, and

these chords vibrate through the drama, the former being dominant.

*Hamlet* is to the last degree tragic. The cause of the action is a murder which was peculiarly atrocious. The emotional disturbance which fills the soul of the hero of the drama is foreshadowed by Shakespeare in a manner which is highly artistic, and absolutely unique. Francisco, a sentinel, is on duty. It is midnight, and very cold. To him enters Bernardo, another soldier, who is to relieve him. Before Francisco, the sentinel on guard, has time to challenge him, Bernardo says: *Who's there?* Francisco responds: *Nay, answer me; stand and unfold yourself.* This is unique. In all military nations, in all ages, the sentinel on guard always challenges the newcomer. Here Shakespeare reverses this universal custom, and makes the soldier who is to relieve the sentinel on duty utter the challenge. By so doing Shakespeare expresses the excitement and dread which fill the soul of Hamlet, and also pervade the kingdom of Denmark. But a moment later the same emotional chord is again touched, this time by Francisco. Francisco's watch has expired. He gives place to Bernardo. As he does so he says:

For this relief much thanks; 't is bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart.

This is the keynote of the drama. Shakespeare thus in the very opening lines strikes it.

*Romeo and Juliet* is a tragedy in which murderous hate, undying love, are inextricably mixed. During

the progress of the action six persons, including the hero and the heroine, meet with violent deaths. It ends in a charnel-house. The play begins with a quarrel, at first droll, later serious, in which the servants, then the partisans, later, the heads of the rival houses of Montagu and Capulet, take part.

Both the chords of love and hate are touched by Romeo, when, seeing the evidences of this disturbance, he says:

What fray was here ?

Yet tell me not, for I have heard it all.

Here 's much to do with hate, but more with love.

Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!

Both chords are again touched by Juliet, when, after meeting and falling in love with Romeo, she learns he is a Montague:

My only love sprung from my only hate!

Too early seen unknown, and known too late!

Prodigious birth of love it is to me,

That I must love a loathed enemy.

Love and hate, both of which are tumultuous, fiery, passionate, permeate the tragedy. Both are appealed to in the Introduction.

In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare portrays the master passion. Most of the characters in the play, at one time or another, are in love, or at least think they are. Shakespeare touches this chord in the first words uttered by the love-sick Duke:

If music be the food of love, play on:



III.—The Introduction must not only be reminiscent, it must also be prescient. It must not only give all necessary information as to events which have caused the action of the drama, it must also foreshadow, perfectly and lucidly, that action. The Main Action of *Twelfth Night* is Viola's effort to win Olivia for the Duke. At the beginning of the action Viola herself loses her heart with her ducal master. Eventually she marries him. This conclusion of the action of the drama is foreshadowed in the Introduction by Viola's *aside* :

I 'll do my best  
To woo your lady.—Yet, a barful strife!  
Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife.

Other similar examples are: *Merchant of Venice*, I., 1, 119, *seq.* ; I., 2, 123, *seq.* ; *Othello*, I., 3, 389, *seq.* ; *Julius Cæsar*, I., 3 ; *Richard III.*, I., 1, 1-41.

The Introduction is the foundation of the play. As the architect must have his plans elaborated and perfected before the first spadeful of earth is dug for the foundations of his building, so must the dramatist have his Plot, which is simply his plan, his design, elaborated and perfected, before he begins to write his drama. Before he writes the first line of his Introduction he must know exactly how his play is to end. He must have what Pater describes as: "That architectural conception of a work which foresees the end from the beginning, and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the very last sentence does but, with undimin-

ished vigor, unfold and justify the first." In a word, all the causes, motives, possibilities of a play lie in the Introduction. It, potentially, is the play.

### GROWTH

The Growth, the second division of the drama, begins with the commencement of the action. The Introduction is narrative, expository, or if it consists of an action, *e. g.*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Julius Cæsar*, it is not the action of the drama, but precedes this, and is a cause thereof. The action of *Romeo and Juliet*, as I have said, begins when Romeo, Mercutio, and their friends start to go to the ball at old Capulet's house. There Romeo sees and falls in love with Juliet, and she with him. The Main Action of *Julius Cæsar* is the assassination of Cæsar, its causes, consummation, consequences. The quarrel between the Tribunes, Flavius and Marullus, on the one hand, and the Citizens on the other, precedes the action of the drama. That begins with Brutus' decision, *It must be by his (Cæsar's) death*, which is followed immediately by Brutus' determination to join the conspiracy.

The Growth calls for the greatest constructive skill on the part of the poet. Two errors in construction jeopardize the poet's success in writing this part of the play. The greater one is making the action of the drama move too rapidly. A flash of lightning blinds. Sudden and excessive sound deafens. Similarly if the action in this part of the

<sup>1</sup> *Style.*

drama moves too rapidly the Climax is reached too soon. The result is an anti-climax. The mind and emotions of the spectator not having been gradually prepared, the desired effect is not produced. The great dramatic poet, says Horace,<sup>1</sup>

. . . does not lavish at a blaze his fire,  
Sudden to glare, and in a smoke expire.

As in a picture there are light and shade, in a musical composition crescendo and diminuendo, so in a drama action must be graduated. "The artist," says Schiller, referring to the dramatic artist, "advances step by step to his end; he strikes only with measured strokes, but he permeates to the depths of our souls precisely because he has stirred them only by degrees."<sup>2</sup> The movement of the action in the Growth or second division of the drama must be, not sudden or rapid, but slow, gradual.

And yet not too slow. This is the second danger against which the poet must guard. If the action moves too slowly the spectator's interest is wearied, exhausted. That interest must be not only awakened and stimulated, but, as the action progresses, it must also be intensified.

The greater danger, however, is that of making the action move too rapidly. To avert that the dramatist makes use of

I.—Subsidiary Actions.

II.—Episodes.

<sup>1</sup> *Ars Poetica*.

<sup>2</sup> *Æsthetical Essays*, translated by John D. Williams, p. 362.

When the former of these is employed the Main Action temporarily ceases movement. An example is the negotiations between Bassanio and Antonio on the one hand, and Shylock on the other, for the loan (*Merchant of Venice*, I., 3). This is a Sub-Action. The Main Action of the drama, the wooing of Portia by Bassanio, and its consequences, does not begin until after these negotiations are completed.

The function of the Episode in a drama is to stop, temporarily, the progress of the action. It is deterrent. Its effect on the drama is similar to that of a dam on a stream of water. The current is checked, arrested, in order that, later, it may flow again with greater rapidity, increased volume, augmented force. An Episode in a drama has a similar effect. It arrests the movement of the action, with the ultimate result of adding increased force and intensity to that movement when it is resumed.

An example of the Episode introduced into the Growth by the poet, to prevent too rapid movement of the action, is Mercutio's description of Queen Mab (*Romeo and Juliet*, I., 4). Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, and the maskers had just started for the ball at the Capulets. In order that the action may not progress too rapidly and the Climax be reached too soon, the result of which would be an anticlimax, Shakespeare introduces this Queen Mab Episode. While Mercutio is reciting this description of *the fairies' midwife*, one of the most perfect specimens of imaginative poetry in all literature, the action of the drama is stayed.

The use of Sub-Actions and Episodes is not by any means restricted to the Growth. They are employed also in the Climax, Fall, and Catastrophe. In each of these divisions of the play their function is the same as in the Growth.

In constructing the latter the skilful dramatist follows the advice that Friar Laurence gave to Romeo :

Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast.

In doing so his most effective means are Sub-Actions and Episodes.

#### CLIMAX

The Climax is the meeting-point of all the Complicating and Resolving forces in the drama. All previous to that tends to involution. The hero becomes more and more entangled in difficulties. In the Climax those difficulties reach their highest development. All following the Climax tends to resolution.

Aristotle compares the action of a drama to the tying and untying of a knot. In the Climax the dramatic knot is perfectly tied. All previous to that is the *desis*, the tying of the knot. All following that is the *lusis*, the untying.

The Climax is the end of the beginning of the action and the beginning of the end.

It is the crest of the dramatic arch, up to which the action has moved; from which that action, changing its direction, moves down to the conclusion of the play.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Diagram, p. 32.

In the Climax there is great concentration, and as a result thereof great intensity. The waters of a river have been flowing placidly over a broad surface. Suddenly they reach a deep and narrow gorge, and through it they sweep and rush tumultuously, and with loud roar. So in the Climax of a drama, the thoughts and emotions of the hero are concentrated, and as a result thereof are stirred to their profoundest depths.

Profound emotion transforms. It goes to the very root and essence of our being. Othello's love changes to hate. The devoted lover and husband becomes the stern, relentless minister of justice.

Profound emotion also reveals. "Physicians, to make some small veins in their patients' arms plump and full, that they may see them the better to let them blood, used to put them into hot water; so the heat of passion presenteth many invisible veins in men's hearts to the eye of the beholder." By means of overmastering feeling the abysmal deeps of personality are revealed.

Shakespeare, therefore, in this division of the play, always places his hero in a grave emotional crisis, when he is under the stress and strain of some powerful and overmastering feeling.<sup>1</sup> It may be love or hate; sorrow, joy, fear, despair. The soul is stirred to its profoundest depth. When in that condition the hero is compelled to make a decision

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Fuller. &

<sup>2</sup> "Neither Will nor Intellect could be present in the absence of Feeling; and Feeling manifested in its completeness carries with it the germs of the other two."—Bain, *Mind and Body*, p. 44.



on which hinges his fate. That crisis in the life of the hero is the Climax of the drama.

Othello is finally convinced that Desdemona has been unfaithful, and that Cassio has been her paramour. He orders Iago to kill Cassio. He reserves to himself the duty of wreaking vengeance on his wife. This command and this decision are the acme of the Climax.

The prediction of the Weird-Sisters to Banquo fills Macbeth with apprehension and disquietude that develop into a dread that is unendurable. He determines to murder Banquo and his son Fleance. The murder of Banquo, the escape of Fleance, is the acme of the Climax.

Bassanio's fate hangs on the choice of the casket. Portia, who fears an unsuccessful choice, begs him to delay. His love is so intense he can wait no longer.

Let me choose;  
For as I am, I live upon the rack.

Propelled by his overmastering emotion he selects the casket which decides not only his own fate, but also that of Portia, Nerissa, Gratiano. This choice is the acme of the Climax.

The same statement is true of the other dramas. When under the stress of some intense emotion the hero makes a decision which decides his fate. This decision is the acme of the Climax.

One of the current errors in reference to Dramatic Construction is that the Climax of a drama is at the end. In a perfectly constructed play the Climax is

Act III. Shakespeare almost always places it there. The acme of the Climax in his plays is generally at the very centre of the play, that is, the middle Scene of Act III. ✓

In *Macbeth* it is Act III., Scene 3, the murder of Banquo, the escape of Fleance. In *Julius Cæsar* it is Act III., Scene 1. Cæsar has been murdered. The conspirators are grouped around the dead body. A *Servant* enters. He is sent by Antony, and is, dramatically, the representative of the avengers. Thus around this bloody corpse the conspirators and avengers meet. In *Hamlet*, the play (III., 2) in which is revealed the guilt of the King is the crest of the dramatic arch. In the *Merchant of Venice* the casket-scene in which Bassanio makes the successful choice of the casket is Act III., Scene 2. In *Romeo and Juliet* it is the final parting of the lovers (III., 5).

In all these cases, and, in fact, in all the Shakespeare plays, the Climax is at, or very near, the centre of the drama.

#### FALL

Ben Jonson was perfectly familiar, both theoretically and practically, with the principles underlying the construction of a drama. He writes:

Now, in every action it behooves the poet to know which is his utmost bound, how far, with fitness and a necessary proportion, he may produce and determine it; that is, till either good fortune change into the worse, or the worse into the better. For as a body without proportion cannot be goodly, no more can the action, either

in comedy or tragedy, without his fit bounds; and every bound, for the nature of the subject, is esteemed the best that is largest, till it can increase no more, so it behooves the action in tragedy or comedy to be let grow till the necessity ask a conclusion.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, the action must grow until it reaches a Climax, and then the Fall and Catastrophe, which constitute the concluding parts of the drama, will follow, not only naturally, but also necessarily.

The Fall is the commencement of the second part of the action. It is the beginning of Aristotle's *lusis*, the untying of the dramatic knot, the unravelling of the Plot. It calls for the surest exercise of the dramatist's skill. The Climax has concentrated the interest. The Fall must not mar or dissipate this interest. To avert this danger, the progress of the action from the Climax to the Fall must not be sudden or abrupt. In this respect Art conforms to Nature.

In listening to a bird singing, to a wind whistling, or to a surf breaking, we usually notice a gradual increase and decrease in the blended sounds. It is the same when observing color. A clear sky at dawn or sunset exhibits between the horizon and the zenith every color of the spectrum from red to purple, yet no boundary line between any two colors. The same fact of gradation is observable also in outlines. Think of the innumerable curves and angles and straight lines that make up the contour of every mountain, tree, bush, fruit, flower,

<sup>1</sup> *Gifford's Edition of Jonson's Works*, edited by Cunningham, vol. iii., p. 424.

bird, beast, and man; yet often not even with a microscope can one tell just where one form of line ceases and another begins.<sup>1</sup>

It is universally conceded that the line of beauty is the curve. "All perfectly beautiful forms must be composed of curves, since there is hardly any common natural form in which it is possible to discover a straight line."<sup>2</sup> To this dictum of Ruskin I add Emerson's verses:

For nature beats in perfect tune,  
And rounds with rhyme her every rune,  
Whether she work in land or sea,  
Or hide underground her alchemy.  
Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,  
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,  
But it carves the bow of beauty there,  
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.<sup>3</sup>

And yet there is abruptness in Nature, *e. g.*, the flash of lightning, the crash of thunder, the shriek of pain, the cry of horror. Strictly speaking, these all happen in the ordinary course of Nature, yet they occur so seldom, are so exceptional, as to be almost irregular, anomalous, eccentric, out of the normal. The proposition remains true that in Nature all changes, whether of color or sound or shape, are graduated. Similarly, in a work of art, all changes must be graduated. Applying this to the subject

<sup>1</sup> Raymond, *Genesis of Art-Form*, pp. 268, 269.

<sup>2</sup> *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 89; Cf. *Modern Painters*, vol. iv., chap. xvii.

<sup>3</sup> *Woodnotes*, part ii., p. 53.

under consideration, we find in the perfect drama all transitions, *e. g.*, entrance or exit of characters, changes from Main to Sub-Action, or vice versa, progress from one Scene or Act to another, all must be, not unexpected, sudden, abrupt, but gradual and foreshadowed. Only thus is the unity of all parts of the play preserved.

Judging the Shakespeare plays by this test, we find they are in perfect accord with Nature. In them the poet in

Every line . . . .

Opens, by just degrees, his whole design.<sup>1</sup>

One of their cardinal qualities, as Coleridge has pointed out, is

expectation in preference to surprise. It is like the true reading of the passage, "God said, Let there be light, and there was *light*"; not there *was* light. As the feeling with which we startle at a shooting star, compared with that of watching the sunrise at the pre-established moment, such and so low is surprise compared with expectation.<sup>2</sup>

In the Fall Complication gives way to Resolution. Feeling, passion, now changes from strain to reaction. Every word, every deed, in the Fall is the result of what has taken place in the Growth and Climax. It also foreshadows what is to occur in the Catastrophe. From the beginning of the Fall every detail must point to the close of the drama, and prepare the mind of the spectator for that close.

<sup>1</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*.

<sup>2</sup> *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Bohn's edition, p. 237.

The Climax, as I have said, has concentrated the interest of the spectator. His mental and emotional strain has been intensified to the highest degree. In order to prevent that strain from becoming oppressive the Fall of a drama is always episodic. During it the action of the drama temporarily ceases movement.

In human life there are and must be periods of repose. Day gives place to night. Activity, physical, mental, emotional, is suspended by rest and sleep. Similarly in a work of musical or dramatic Art action is followed by rest. Mozart was asked, "What produces the most effect in music?" He replied, "No music." In a drama there must be times during which the movement of the action is temporarily stayed. Such a period is the Fall, which is always more or less episodic. Its function is twofold:

I.—To furnish a needed rest to the overwrought emotions and thoughts of the spectators.

II.—To foreshadow and prepare for the Catastrophe, the conclusion of the play.

In *Macbeth* the Fall is III., 5, to IV., *finis*. It is devoted to a narration of Macbeth's second interview with the Witches, to the interview of Macduff with Malcolm, in England, and to a portrayal of the slaughter of Macduff's wife, children, servants. The latter is the only action in it. The remainder is episodic, preparatory.

The same is true of *Julius Cæsar*, *Othello*, and all the plays. In the Fall the action more or less ceases movement, and in it every preparation is



made for the conclusion of the action in the Catastrophe.

#### CATASTROPHE

This word, when used in dramatic criticism, does not necessarily mean disaster. It may mean that, it may mean the reverse. It is derived from two Greek words, *kata*, down, and *strepho*, *strephein*, to turn. It means to turn up and down, to overturn. When used in dramatic criticism it describes the final event in a drama, *e. g.*, a death in a tragedy, a marriage in a comedy, to produce which there has been an overturning, a change in the direction of the Main Action.

The Catastrophe must be:

I.—Organic. It must be not forced or artificial, but the natural result, the inevitable consequence of the Main Action. It must be in living, vital union with all the previous parts of the play, and must be the outgrowth of them. Its relation to them is similar to that of the flower to the bush, the fruit to the tree. It depicts the recoil upon the hero of his own deed. It portrays the fate of the actors in the drama, which fate is the outgrowth of their own characters and conduct.

II.—Rapid in movement. The spectators have been thoroughly prepared for it. All impediments to progress have been removed. The intense mental and emotional strain, a pleased expectancy if it be a comedy, pity and fear if it be a tragedy, can be continued to the close only by great rapidity of movement.

Mental excitement, profound, concentrated feeling, find expression in language which is concise, in action which is immediate. Words, therefore, in the Catastrophe should be few; speeches, soliloquies, brief. Action and that swift, continuous, is a necessary quality, a prime requisite of the Catastrophe.

III.—Yet the movement should not be abrupt, or offensively sudden. There should be no surprises. No new characters should be introduced. The thoughts and emotions of the spectators, which have been stimulated to the intensest degree, must not be diverted into other channels. As the end of the drama is approached the strain may, by reaction, be relieved. That relief, however, must not be either unforeseen or unexpected. This attribute of the Catastrophe necessitates that moderated energy in the action which results in perfect gradation. The unfoldment of the Plot in this, the final stage of the drama, while rapid, must be as regular and gradual as the sinking of the sun beneath the horizon at the close of day.

The Catastrophe in *Macbeth* (V.) is Lady Macbeth's remorse, which becomes so unendurable that it causes insanity and suicide; the despair of Macbeth, which is so soon followed by his tragic death at the hands of Macduff. The Catastrophe of *Julius Cæsar* is the defeat of Brutus and Cassius at the battle of Philippi, and their deaths by suicide. That of the *Merchant of Venice* is the happy marriages of Bassanio and Portia, Gratiano and Nerissa, Lorenzo and Jessica; and the return, safely and richly laden, of three of Antonio's argosies. ✓

To produce these results there has been a *Katastrophy*, an overturning, a change in the direction of the action.

Many features of the subject, some of them important, have not been mentioned, much less discussed, in this chapter. This omission is intentional. It was not my purpose to do more than consider the subject in its broadest outlines, and only to the degree necessary to make the studies on the different plays perfectly intelligible.

In those studies the construction of a drama in all its details is considered.

## CHAPTER III

### MACBETH

#### INTRODUCTION

##### I., 1-4

THE scene of this drama is Scotland. The time is the eleventh century. At that time in Scotland, in fact in all the nations of Northern Europe, the belief that human affairs were influenced by supernatural beings such as witches, ghosts, was universal. At the very beginning of the play Shakespeare makes use of this fact to create Local Color. The painter who would place tropical fruits in an Arctic environment would make his picture absurd, inartistic. If Shakespeare had introduced witches into his Roman plays, or into those the scene of which is Italy, the *Merchant of Venice* for example, he would have made a similar mistake. Everything in a drama must be in harmony with the time and place in which the action of the play occurs. ✓

In accordance with this canon of art Shakespeare opens this play with the meeting of the Weird Sisters on the barren heath in Scotland. This Scene is in perfect harmony with the time and place in which Macbeth and Duncan lived and died. By means of it Shakespeare brings the spectator

into intellectual sympathy with the environment, thereby creating Local Color or Atmosphere.

Another dramatic purpose effected by this opening Scene is, the emotional chord that vibrates through the drama is touched. This play is a tragedy. Its subject is

the fierce dispute

Betwixt damnation and impassioned clay.<sup>1</sup>

It portrays the struggle in the soul of the Macbeths; the victory of evil; the ruin and death which result therefrom. This is typified by this opening Scene, the desert place, the blasted heath, the thunder, lightning, rain, the unearthly Witches. It is all weird, tragic, and prepares the emotions of the spectators for what is to follow.

The Scene performs one more dramatic function. It introduces, by an allusion to him, Macbeth, the hero of the drama. The Witches expect to meet him *When the battle's lost and won*, which will be *ere the set of sun, upon the heath*.

This Scene, although very brief, is very effective.

In Scene 2 Shakespeare gives a description of the battle of which the Witches have just spoken. Duncan, his sons and attendants, are in camp near Forres. To them *a bleeding Sergeant* comes, doubtless sent by Macbeth. He informs the King of the insurrection of *the merciless Macdonwald*; of the invasion of Sweno, King of Norway; of the treachery of

that most disloyal traitor,

The thane of Cawdor.

<sup>1</sup> Keats, *Sonnet on Sitting Down to read Lear*.

The result of the battle was the victory of the loyal troops led by brave Macbeth and Banquo. King Duncan, wishing to punish the thane of Cawdor, and to reward Macbeth, says to Ross:

No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive  
Our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death,  
And with his former title greet Macbeth.

In this Scene Duncan reveals himself as weak, confiding, unwarlike. In direct contrast to him is Macbeth, *Bellona's bridegroom*, who is energetic, fearless, kingly.

This Scene, like the former one, creates a tragic atmosphere. The Sergeant is *a bloody man*, whose *gashes and wounds cry for help*. *The merciless Macdonwald is unseamed . . . from the nave to the chaps*, and Macbeth hath *fixed his head upon our battlements*. The death of the traitorous thane of Cawdor is announced. Rebellion, invasion, treason, are described. All are associated with carnage. Thus the tragic chord that vibrates through the drama is again touched, and the spectators are thereby brought into emotional sympathy with the action of the play.

In Scene 1 Shakespeare portrayed the supernatural. In Scene 2, the natural, the human. In Scene 3, like the converging branches of a river, the supernatural and the natural unite. The Witches appear and meet the victorious generals Macbeth and Banquo. At the conclusion of the first Scene the Witches in unison said:

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.



The first words Macbeth utters, are a refrain of these words:

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

Thus by his opening words Macbeth reveals his sympathy with these Weird Sisters.

Banquo describes them in detail:

What are these

So wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
And yet are on 't? Live you? or are you aught  
That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
By each at once her choppy finger laying  
Upon her skinny lips; you should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

Macbeth commands them to speak. They obey, and hail him as thane of Glamis, which he was by birth; as thane of Cawdor, which he has just become by the grace of his sovereign; and *king hereafter*. These words, as Banquo informs us, produce on Macbeth a profound effect. Why? In Scotland, at that time, on the death of the king, if his son was under age, a near relative succeeded to the throne. Malcolm was young. Macbeth was the cousin of Duncan, and, as he thought and believed, his legitimate successor. *This business*, as he later describes it, *this enterprise*, as Lady Macbeth speaks of it, had occupied his thoughts, was the subject of his hopes.

Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?

And wakes it now, to look so green and pale  
At what it did so freely ? From this time  
Such I account thy love ? Art thou afeard  
To be the same in thine own act and valour  
As thou art in desire ? Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
Letting " I dare not " wait upon " I would,"  
Like the poor cat i' the adage ?

Upon it Macbeth and his wife, *his dearest partner  
of greatness*, had conferred.

What beast was 't then  
That made you break this enterprise to me ?

The matter had in fact been more than a reflection, a subject of conference. It had taken the form of a resolve, supplemented by an oath to carry it into execution. Macbeth had *sworn* to carry it out.

When the Witches, therefore, hailed him as the one *that shalt be king hereafter* they touched a responsive chord in his bosom. They revealed to him, as in a glass, his overmastering ambition, his wicked resolve. So unexpected, so true, so startling, was the revelation, that it caused him

to start, and seem to fear.

In response to Banquo's prayer,

Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
Your favours nor your hate,

they predict his future :

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.  
 Not so happy, yet much happier  
 Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

They say no more, but vanish

Into the air;  
 And what seem'd corporal melted  
 As breath into the wind

In order to impress the predictions on the minds of the spectators of the drama Macbeth and Banquo reiterate them. This is an example of Repetition, Alteration, Alternation.

Immediately after the Witches vanish Ross and Angus enter with a message of thanks from the King to Macbeth, and by command of the King call him *thane of Cawdor*. He was by birth thane of Glamis; he is now made thane of Cawdor. Two of the predictions of the Witches have thereby been quickly fulfilled. *The greatest*, Macbeth says, *is behind*. Banquo, unimpassioned, thoughtful, loyal, utters a warning:

But 't is strange:  
 And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
 The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
 Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's  
 In deepest consequence.

Macbeth is so *rapt* that Banquo's warning falls on deaf ears. Like Cassius' threats to Brutus they *pass by him as the idle wind which he respects not*. These predictions foreshadow perfectly the action

of the drama. Macbeth in an *aside*, uttered a moment later, says:

Two truths are told,  
As happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme.

This is perfect foreshadowing. Shakespeare by means of three *asides* now lays bare to us Macbeth's mind and heart, and reveals to us his deepest thoughts and feelings.

This supernatural soliciting

Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I amthane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of nature? Present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings:  
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.

If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,  
Without my stir.

Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

A moment later Macbeth, Banquo, Ross, and Angus go to meet the King.

Duncan is at his castle at Forres. With him are his sons and Attendants. Malcolm informs him of the execution of Cawdor, who died so bravely that

nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it.

Duncan acknowledges he had been entirely deceived by him, that upon him he had

built  
An absolute trust.

Macbeth and Banquo arrive. They are greeted by Duncan, who recognizes their great services, and promises to reward them. He then makes an announcement which surprises and profoundly stirs Macbeth:

Sons, kinsmen, thanes,  
And you whose places are the nearest, know  
We will establish our estate upon  
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter  
The Prince of Cumberland: which honour must  
Not unaccompanied invest him only,  
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
On all deservers.

Addressing Macbeth he announces his determination to honor him further by visiting him at his castle at Inverness. Shakespeare then gives us another glance into Macbeth's soul by means of an *aside*.

A drama is the most objective of all forms of literature. The dramatist cannot speak in his own person. The only mediums by which he can find

expression are the *dramatis personæ*. If he wishes to reveal their secret thoughts, motives, purposes, he does not tell us about them; he makes them reveal themselves in asides, soliloquies. Like a lighted lamp in a cavern, which illumines and makes visible that which previously was shrouded in darkness, so an aside or a soliloquy in a drama reveals the secret thoughts and motives, the plans and hopes of the speaker.

By such means Macbeth now discloses to us the effect on him of Duncan's announcement:

The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;  
Let not light see my black and deep desires:  
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

Macbeth had hoped to succeed Duncan. By his prowess he had suppressed the rebellion. He believed he had fairly won, and was justly entitled to, the throne. His hopes, however, were all dissipated by Duncan's announcement, making the Prince of Cumberland his successor. The change wrought in Macbeth is immediate, profound, radical. All questionings, hesitancies, considerations of prudence, cease. Irresolution disappears. He at once decides to seize the throne by force, which necessitated the murder of Duncan, and possibly that of Malcolm; and then, having succeeded in doing so, to kill Banquo and Fleance, and thereby prevent the seed of Banquo becoming kings, and succeeding him.



The execution of this determination, together with all the consequences thereof, constitutes the Main Action of the drama. Or, to express it in another form, the Main Action of the play is the Rise and Fall of the Macbeths.

The real tragedy of the play, however, is not in the murderous blows, the flowing blood, the violent deaths, which take place during the progress of the action. A portrayal of murderous deeds does not constitute a tragedy. This is only a bloody spectacle. The mission of the artist is to describe states of soul. "Crime becomes, then, really tragic when it merely furnishes the theme for a profound psychological study of motive and character."<sup>1</sup> The tragic in this play is the dedication of Macbeth and his *fiend-like Queen* to evil, and their consequent moral ruin. It is in their perverted wills, violated consciences. "Tragedy . . . depends primarily on the collision of real spiritual forces."<sup>2</sup> In this play it is the death-struggle which is taking place within the Macbeths between "the ghost of the Brute" and their better natures; between murderous ambition and conscience.

The real scene of the action, therefore, is the souls of the Macbeths. The revelation of this tragic struggle is necessarily made by means of soliloquies and asides, of which there are so many in the play. This is their dramatic function. They "have interest, not as lamentations or rhapsodies, but as giving the swift inner movement of the soul,

<sup>1</sup> Lowell, *Old English Dramatists*, p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetic*, p. 358.

explaining itself to itself, or about to change its attitude toward the other souls." <sup>1</sup> By means of them Shakespeare reveals to us, in all their variety, subtlety, and intensity, those dreadful and involved passions in the Macbeths which are in conflict.

The Introduction ends with the exit of Macbeth, who humbly takes his leave in order that he may be

the harbinger and make joyful  
The hearing of my wife with your approach.

In this Introduction

I.—Shakespeare has brought forward all the principal characters in the drama, Duncan, Macbeth, Banquo, Malcolm, in person, and Lady Macbeth by a reference to her. From what we have seen and heard of them, excepting Lady Macbeth, we can perceive what are the salient traits of each. Duncan is peace-loving, weak, overconfiding, generous. Banquo is brave, thoughtful, almost skeptical. Macbeth possesses tireless energy, is fearless, a born leader, is morally weak and vacillating, and is ambitious to an inordinate, a murderous degree.

If the play is properly constructed the characters will develop along these lines, and at the close of their dramatic lives will be essentially the same as in the Introduction.

II.—Shakespeare has informed us fully of the cause of the action of the drama.

III.—That action has been clearly foreshadowed.

In this Introduction every detail has led, step by step, naturally, inevitably, up to the beginning of

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *Æsthetics*.

the action. The chord that vibrates through the play is struck.

Present fears

Are less than horrible imaginings:

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,

that is, exists only in my imagination, is soon to be followed by a murder that is actual.

#### GROWTH

#### I., 5-II., *finis*

Macbeth had left the King in Forres, and had hastened to Inverness, to inform his wife of Duncan's approach. Before either Macbeth or the King arrives at Inverness Shakespeare introduces Lady Macbeth. She enters *reading a letter*. It is from her husband. It informs her of his interview with the Witches, and of their three predictions, two of which have already been fulfilled. The third one, *Hail, king that shalt be!* is still unfulfilled, and is, as Macbeth writes to her, a presage *of what greatness is promised thee*.

This is the third time Shakespeare has informed us of these predictions. Why has he, at the very beginning of the drama, repeated them so often? These prophecies developed instantly, and to an overmastering degree, in both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth their slumbering ambition, from which proceeds the action of the drama. Shakespeare wishes to impress this fact most deeply on the spectators. He therefore iterates and reiterates them.

His technique in this matter is very effective, and is a perfect example of Repetition, Alteration, Alternation.

As soon as she has finished reading the letter Lady Macbeth begins to make plans to kill the King and seize the throne. This marks the beginning of the action of the drama. The consummation of these plans in the murder of Duncan, and the immediate consequences thereof, is the subject of the Growth or second division of the play.

In two soliloquies Lady Macbeth reveals to us her intensest feelings and desires, her innermost thoughts and purposes. She is the devoted wife, loyal and loving; she is fearless and cruel; she checks all appeals and warnings of conscience; and in one of the most awful invocations in all literature dedicates herself to evil:

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry, " Hold, hold! "

As the prophecies of the Weird Sisters had had on Macbeth an immediate and malign effect, had developed in him, to the highest degree, a wicked and cruel ambition, so the report of those predictions, as contained in his letter to Lady Macbeth, had had a similar effect on her.

Between the two, however, there is a material difference. Macbeth had *compunctious visitings of nature, i. e.*, feelings of pity, warnings of conscience, which acted as deterrents. No one knew him better than his wife. In the first of the two soliloquies she describes him, and that is one of the dramatic functions of that soliloquy:

. . . yet do I fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As generally understood, the second line seems to be inharmonious with, in fact contradictory to, the remainder of the description. *Kindness* in the sense of good-will, benignity, tenderness, hardly seems to be a quality of a man who *wouldst wrongly win*; who reached the throne by a bloody path a path strewn with murdered men; who, later, maintained himself on the throne by the slaughter of a helpless woman and children.

It is a canon of dramatic art that a character must be consistent. That does not mean unchanging. Men in real life are vacillating, inconstant. So are they in the drama. But in both, a character must be consistent. In interpreting it, therefore, all the details must be considered, and found to be accordant.

Macbeth was not *full o' the milk of human kindness* in the sense of being benign. If Lady Macbeth had so meant she would have been in error, and her description of her husband's character would have been, to that degree, incorrect. She used the word *kindness* in the same sense in which it was used in Old and Middle English.

To catch the nearest way; thou wouldst be great;  
 Art not without ambition, but without  
 The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,  
 That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
 And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou 'ldst have, great  
     Glamis,  
 That which cries, "Thus thou must do, if thou have it;  
 And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
 Than wishest should be undone."

Macbeth, according to his wife, is ambitious, but is not yet hardened in wickedness. He is *without the illness*, i. e., hardness of heart, which, she thinks, is a concomitant of successful ambition. That which restrains him, however, is not a moral, but a prudential consideration. It is simply a fear of the consequences of wrong-doing. She therefore mistrusts his courage, and desires that he may

*Kind* is derived from Anglo-Saxon *cynd*, nature, *cynde*, natural, innate. Webster's first definition is, "characteristic of the species; belonging to one's nature." This was the primary signification.\* Referring to this word in *Cursor Mundi* a long poem translated from the French about 1290 A.D., T. L. Kington Oliphant says † " *Kind* had hitherto meant *naturalis*; in p. 1146 it gets the farther sense of *benignus*. These two senses lingered on side by side for nearly 400 years, as we see in Milton." On this subject Dean Trench writes ‡: "Again, there are some words in our Liturgy which are not unfrequently misunderstood. In the Litany we ask of God that it would please Him 'to give and preserve to our use the *kindly* fruits of the earth.' What is commonly understood by these '*kindly* fruits of the earth'? The fruits, if I mistake not, in which the *kindness* of God, or of nature toward us, finds its expression. This is no unworthy meaning to give to these words, but

\* Cf. Stormonth's *Dictionary*; Skeat's *Etymological Dictionary*; Brewer's *Etymological and Pronouncing Dictionary*.

† *The Old and Middle English*, p. 345.

‡ *English Past and Present*, pp. 251, 252.



come to her, *That I may pour my spirits in thine ear* and thereby silence his scruples and overcome his timidity.

Lady Macbeth's description of her husband as he is at the beginning of the drama is in every detail accurate. As the action progresses everything he says and does confirms Lady Macbeth's judgment.

A messenger arrives and announces the approach

still it is not the right one. The '*kindly* fruits' are the 'natural fruits,' those which the earth according to its *kind* should naturally bring forth, which it is appointed to produce. To show you how little '*kindly*' once meant benignant, as it means now, I will instance an employment of it from Sir Thos. More's *Life of Richard III.* He tells us that Richard calculated by murdering his two nephews in the Tower to make himself accounted 'a *kindly* king'—not certainly a *kindly* one in our present usage of the word; but, having put them out of the way, that he should then be lineal heir of the crown, and should thus be reckoned as king *by kind* or natural descent; and such was of old the constant use of the word. And Bishop Andrews, preaching on the 'Conspiracy of the Gowries,' asks concerning the conspirators, 'Where are they? Gone to their own place, to Judas, their brother; as is most *kindly*; the sons to the father of wickedness, there to be plagued with him forever.' "

In this sense Shakespeare frequently uses this and the cognate words. Hamlet describes his uncle-father as

"A little more than kin and less than *kind*."

I., 2, 65.

This means (I quote from Grant White): "In marrying my mother you have made yourself something more than my kinsman, and at the same time have shown yourself unworthy of our race, our *kind*." And again:

"Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, *kindless* villain."

II., 2, 609.

*i. e.*, an unnatural villain, one contrary to human *kind*. The Fool says to Lear (I., 5, 13),

"Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee *kindly*,"

*i. e.*, according to her nature, brutally. When the Clown brought

of Macbeth and the King. But a moment later Macbeth himself enters. Lady Macbeth immediately and frankly hints to him her plan to bring to fulfilment the third prediction of the Weird Sisters:

O, never  
Shall sun that morrow see!

on which Duncan goes hence.

to Cleopatra the pretty worm of Nilus, he said (A. and C., V., 2, 263),

" You must think this, look you,  
That the worm will do his *kind*,"

i. e., bite, poison, kill.

It was in this sense that Lady Macbeth uses the word *kindness*. That becomes very evident if one accepts Prof. Moulton's suggestion and prints the phrase, "as one word, not 'human kindness,' but 'humankindness.'" \* Macbeth was *too full o' the milk* (the essence) of human kindness, of human nature, too thoroughly human, to rise above the weakness of a man, and *catch the nearest way*, use violent, bloody means to gain the throne. He would, Lady Macbeth feared, shrink from murder, and that, in her opinion, was the surest and quickest way for him to become what the Weird Sisters predicted, viz., *King that shalt be!* And in this opinion she was entirely correct. He refused positively to *yield to that suggestion*, which was to murder Duncan. He preferred to trust to *chance*.

" If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,  
Without my stir."

Later, he did murder Duncan. The deed, however, was done only after he had been cajoled and taunted, and his courage had been screwed *to the sticking-place*, by Lady Macbeth; only after a most violent mental and emotional conflict. The description of him which Lady Macbeth gives in this soliloquy was, therefore, correct and consistent from the first to the last word. All the details accord with one another, and are in perfect harmony with his character and life. He was not kind-hearted, humane, benignant. He was, like other men, averse to such unnatural methods as violence, bloodshed, murder. He was

" . . . too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way."

\* *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, pp. 149, 150.

She at once begins to pour her *spirits* into his ear:

To beguile the time,  
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under 't. He that 's coming  
Must be provided for: and you shall put  
This night's great business into my dispatch;  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

The plot is too daring, too brutal to win Macbeth's approval. He hesitates. *We will speak further.* Such is the inception of the plot of the Macbeths.

As Duncan enters Macbeth's castle, the scene of his cruel and violent death, both he and Banquo observe and comment upon the beauty, fragrance, peacefulness, of surrounding Nature.

The heaven's breath  
Smells wooingly here: no jutting, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,  
The air is delicate.

Shakespeare was a master of Contrast. By his reference here to the peacefulness and quiet surrounding the castle, the bloody deed so soon to be consummated within its walls becomes more startling and appalling.

Duncan enters. He is received by Lady Macbeth with every expression of gratitude and loyalty. He accepts her words as sincere and heartfelt. Little

does he suspect danger. He has learned nothing from the treason of the late thane of Cawdor. He inquires for Macbeth, protests anew his love for him, and declares his intention to *continue our graces towards him*. Duncan is still perfectly guileless. He is still unable

To find the mind's construction in the face.

Without taking any measures to guard against treason, he enters the castle, there to meet his fate.

Omission to do what is necessary  
Seals a commission to a blank of danger.

Shakespeare now, by means of a soliloquy, reveals to us the conflict that is taking place in Macbeth's mind and heart between the *assassination* and the *consequence*. The wickedness of the murder of Duncan is not with Macbeth a factor in the problem. He considers only the punishment following crime and sin; that

This even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips.

He is not afraid of punishment beyond the grave, but of that which will be meted out to him here. He finds further reasons against the deed in that he is both a kinsman and a subject of Duncan; that Duncan is his guest; and that Duncan has been so *meek* and so just, *clear in his great office*. As the result of his reflections he acknowledges to himself

I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition.

Macbeth had a keen appreciation of the fact that what a man sows that he also reaps; that consequences inevitably follow deeds; that if a deed is good the consequence is happiness, if evil, misery and death. He believes implicitly in the supremacy of the moral law. He does not err through ignorance or mistaken judgment. Nor does he deceive himself as to the motive which actuates him. He acknowledges frankly he has no cause to kill Duncan, but his own *Vaulting ambition*. This, he confesses, not only may, but will, defeat itself. As the horseman vaulting into the saddle sometimes

. . . o'erleaps  
And falls on the other

side so will this deed fail to accomplish that which he so much desires.

This is perfect foreshadowing. It foretells the future action of the drama.

Lady Macbeth now enters. Macbeth announces to her the result of his deliberation :

We will proceed no further in this business.

Her judgment of him as expressed in her soliloquy is confirmed. Her *fear* that his *nature*

. . . is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way

is well grounded. She does not despair, or even hesitate. Immediately she brings to bear upon him her potent influence. She knows him to be a brave man, *Bellona's bridegroom*. She taunts him with cowardice.

Art thou afeard  
To be the same in thine own act and valour  
As thou art in desire?

She reminds him that when he first suggested the *enterprise* to her neither the time nor place was favorable, but that now both are.

What beast was 't, then,  
That made you break this enterprise to me?  
When you durst do it, then you were a man;  
And, to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place  
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:  
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now  
Does unmake you.

She instances herself as being so completely dedicated to the work that even maternal love, if that were an impediment, would be disregarded.

I have given suck, and know  
How tender 't is to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.

Macbeth hesitates. *If we should fail?* Lady Macbeth does not consider that worthy of a moment's consideration:



We fail!

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we 'll not fail.

She then unfolds in detail her plan for the murder.  
When Duncan and his two chamberlains are asleep

What cannot you and I perform upon  
The unguarded Duncan ?

Just as easy will it be to lay the guilt upon *his*  
*spongy officers*.

Will it not be received,  
When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber and used their very daggers,  
That they have done 't ?

Macbeth yields. His hesitancies, his prudential  
reasonings, his fears of failure, are silenced.

I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.

He has made his decision. It is against the  
right. His will is perverted, his conscience en-  
feebled. From this time its protests grow weaker  
and weaker, until finally they are silenced.

The action of the drama now moves with great  
rapidity. A brief conversation takes place between  
Banquo and Fleance, in the court of the castle,  
after midnight. *The moon is down*, the stars are not  
shining. It is so dark Fleance bears a torch.

Banquo gives to Fleance his sword and dagger.  
Notwithstanding

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me  
And yet I would not sleep.

Then in a few words he reveals to Fleance his foreboding of ill.

Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!

Despite his presentiment of danger Banquo neglects to take any precautionary measures. He even parts with his weapons of defence, giving them to Fleance. Although this is apparently a trivial detail still it is very significant. It reveals to us a defect in Banquo's character,—neglect to guard against impending and foreseen danger. This leads to fatal results in his case, as it had in that of Duncan.

Macbeth enters. Banquo informs him of the King's generosity :

He hath been in unusual pleasure, and  
Sent forth great largess to your offices.  
This diamond he greets your wife withal,  
By the name of most kind hostess.

He adds:

I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:  
To you they have show'd some truth.

Then Macbeth hints of his dark purpose, and expresses his desire to have Banquo as a confederate. Banquo, not so guileless as Duncan, had already divined Macbeth's purpose. He decides to join

Macbeth in that plan which shall make *honour* for him

. . . So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it.

Banquo and Fleance then retire. Macbeth orders his servant:

Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell.

The servant goes to execute the command. Macbeth is left alone. Then, in a soliloquy, the last before the murder, Shakespeare makes Macbeth again lay bare his mind and heart. In imagination Macbeth sees a dagger. He apostrophizes it:

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;  
And such an instrument I was to use, *seq.*

In this soliloquy the voice of conscience is not heard. It is stilled. Neither is there wavering, indecision. On the contrary, he wishes to act, and to act promptly:

Whiles I threat he lives:  
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

A bell rings, the signal agreed upon by Lady Macbeth and himself as a notification to him that everything was ready. Macbeth recognizes it:

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.  
Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

While he is in Duncan's chamber Lady Macbeth appears on the stage. In two brief soliloquies she reveals her part in the deed. She drugged the possets of the grooms; she *laid their daggers ready*, so her husband *could not miss 'em*. She even would have *done 't*

Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept.

As the flash of lightning on the dark and stormy night makes the gloom more oppressive and terrible so does this gleam of filial affection in Lady Macbeth reveal more clearly and impressively her dark, sinister, murderous nature. Aptly did she describe herself:

That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold;  
What hath quench'd them hath given me fire.

Macbeth from *within* had heard Lady Macbeth soliloquizing. He whispered

Who 's there ? what, ho!

Now he enters and immediately says:

I have done the deed.

No sooner is the deed consummated than a violent reaction takes place in Macbeth. His soul revolts against his conduct. He has become morally insane. He is surprised he cannot say *Amen* when the groom prays *God bless us !* His distempered imagination has become so active he thinks he hears a voice cry

“ Sleep no more!

Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.”

Lady Macbeth tries to reassure him :

Why, worthy thane,  
You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
So brainsickly of things.

Lady Macbeth experiences neither penitence nor fear. She is cool, deliberate, resourceful, daring. She directs her conscience-stricken husband what to do :

Go get some water,  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.  
Why did you bring these daggers from the place ?  
They must lie there: go carry them; and smear  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

Macbeth is overcome with fear and remorse :

I 'll go no more:  
I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on 't again I dare not.

Lady Macbeth taunts him with indecision and fear :

Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead  
Are but as pictures: 't is the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
I 'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;  
For it must seem their guilt.

Macbeth hears a knocking. His fears are intensified; his remorse becomes more harrowing :

Whence is that knocking ?

How is 't with me, when every noise appals me ?

What hands are here ? ha ! they pluck out mine eyes.

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood

Clean from my hand ? No ; this my hand will rather

The multitudinous seas incarnadine,

Making the green one red.

Lady Macbeth perceives that her husband is wholly unnerved. She frankly acknowledges her complicity in the deed, and again taunts him with cowardice :

My hands are of your colour : but I shame

To wear a heart so white.

And as she, again and again, and still again, hears *knocking* at the *south entry* she rises to the emergency, and directs her terror-stricken husband what to do to divert suspicion from themselves :

I hear a knocking

At the south entry : retire we to our chamber :

A little water clears us of this deed :

How easy is it, then ! Your constancy

Hath left you unattended. (*Knocking within.*) Hark !  
more knocking.

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us

And show us to be watchers. Be not lost

So poorly in your thoughts.

She fails to inspire her husband with courage ; or to assuage the pangs of his remorse. He says

To know my deed, 't were best not know myself.

(*Knocking within.*)



Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

✓ In all literature there is no more perfect description of Remorse than this revelation of Macbeth's feelings after he had murdered Duncan.

The action of the drama, which has been moving with great rapidity, now temporarily stops. The remainder of the Growth (the last two Scenes of Act II.) are episodic. Shakespeare introduces them for the twofold purpose of checking too rapid progress of the action, and relieving the thoughts and emotions of the spectators of the drama, which have been excited to an intense degree.

Morning dawns. The members of the King's suite knock at the door of his apartments. The Porter answers very tardily. Only after repeated and loud knocks does he respond to the demands of the impatient nobles for admission. The door which he guards is not only a barrier to the entrance of Macduff and Lennox, it is also an obstruction to the movement of the action.

While the Porter delays the opening of the door he indulges in reflections which are full of grim humor:

Here 's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key., *seq.*

Like a ray of sunshine on a stormy day which makes everything more sombre and gloomy, so the Porter's humor contrasts strikingly with the tragic surroundings, and makes them sadder and more

terrifying. This is its dramatic function, and to accomplish this Shakespeare introduced it here.

The door, finally, is opened. One after another the members of Duncan's suite enter. Macduff goes into the sleeping-chamber of Duncan, and sees the bloody corpse of the King. He returns and gives the alarm. Macbeth expresses his pretended surprise and grief in words that were far more true than either he or any one present knew :

Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant,  
There 's nothing serious in mortality: *seq.*

He then acknowledges he murdered the grooms. When Macduff asked him why he had done so, he replied :

Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious,  
Loyal and neutral, in a moment ? No man :  
The expedition of my violent love  
Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,  
His silver skin laced with his golden blood;  
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature  
For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,  
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers  
Unmannerly breech'd with gore; who could refrain,  
That had a heart to love, and in that heart  
Courage to make 's love known ?

Malcolm and Donalbain confer. They are not in doubt as to the perpetrator of the deed. They realize the danger they are in from the same murderer, and preserve a discreet silence. Lady Macbeth

faints. Her physical nature succumbs to the fearful strain to which it has been subjected by her iron will and dauntless courage.

All make their exit except Malcolm and Donalbain. The former announces his determination to go to England. Shakespeare in this foreshadows the action of the drama. Donalbain decides to go to Ireland. Malcolm expresses the suspicions and fears, both of himself and brother:

This murderous shaft that 's shot  
Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way  
Is to avoid the aim. Therefore, to horse;  
And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,  
But shift away: there 's warrant in that theft  
Which steals itself when there 's no mercy left.

This division of the drama ends with a conversation between *Ross and an old Man* and Macduff, the dramatic purpose of which is to convey the information that

't is most like  
The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

And further that

He is already named, and gone to Scone  
To be invested.

Duncan's body has been conveyed to Colme-kill, there to be interred in the royal burying-ground.

The first step in Macbeth's effort to secure the crown has been successfully taken. Duncan has been killed. Malcolm, the Prince of Cumberland,

his legitimate successor, has fled. Macbeth has gone to Scone to be crowned. The Macbeths have brought to a successful consummation

This night's great business . . .  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

## CLIMAX

## III., 1-4

Notwithstanding Macbeth's success he was neither calm nor confident. As Angus later described him, he felt

. . . his title  
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.

The cause of his disquietude was Banquo.

To be thus is nothing;  
But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep.

Before he murdered Duncan he had solicited Banquo's aid *upon that business*. Banquo, whose suspicions were fully aroused, promised it on condition he could keep his

. . . bosom franchised and allegiance clear.

Macbeth did not again broach the subject, but proceeded with his bloody work without Banquo's assistance.

The Climax of the play begins with a soliloquy in which Banquo discloses his belief in Macbeth's guilt:

Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,  
Thou play'dst most foully for 't.

He then refers to the prediction of the Weird Sisters, and, basing his belief on the fulfilment of the prediction to Macbeth, questions why that made to himself should not likewise come true. His reflections are brought to a sudden close by the entrance of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, who have returned from Scone, where they have been crowned.

Macbeth greets Banquo cordially, and requests his *presence at a solemn supper* to be given that evening. He then inquires:

Ride you this afternoon?

Is 't far you ride?

Banquo replies:

As far, my lord, as will fill up the time  
'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,  
I must become a borrower of the night  
For a dark hour or twain.

Macbeth urges him:

Fail not our feast.

He is conscious that Banquo suspects him of the

murder of Duncan. In order to divert that suspicion Macbeth then refers to Malcolm and Donalbain as

. . . our bloody cousins . . . bestow'd  
In England and in Ireland, not confessing  
Their cruel parricide.

Before Banquo takes his leave Macbeth makes a final inquiry :

Goes Fleance with you ?

Banquo replies in the affirmative.

Macbeth then dismisses all the company but an *Attendant*. As soon as they are left alone he says :

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those men  
Our pleasure ?

He orders the Attendant to bring the men. While he is alone he reveals, in a soliloquy, his thoughts, feelings, purposes, the expression of which in action forms the Climax of the drama :

Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature  
Reigns that which would be fear'd: 't is much he dares;  
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
To act in safety. There is none but he  
Whose being I do fear: and, under him,  
My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,  
Mark Antony's was by Cæsar. He chid the sisters  
When first they put the name of king upon me,  
And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like



They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
 Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,  
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
 Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
 No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
 For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;  
 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
 Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
 Only for them; and mine eternal jewel  
 Given to the common enemy of man,  
 To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
 Rather than so, come fate into the list,  
 And champion me to the utterance!

Fate accepts the challenge. It enters the *lists*, "the enclosed ground in which combats are fought" (Schmidt), and *champions* Macbeth *to the utterance*, i. e., fights with him to the death. Fate wins. From this time Macbeth is doomed.

The two Murderers for whom Macbeth had sent enter. This was not the first time they and Macbeth had met and conferred. He refers to the murder of Banquo which had been previously considered by them. They assent to Macbeth's proposition:

We shall, my lord,  
 Perform what you command us.

Macbeth gives them their final instructions as to where they shall *plant themselves*, and then, after speaking of the murder of Banquo, adds:

. . . and with him—  
 To leave no rubs nor botches in the work—

Fleance his son, that keeps him company,  
Whose absence is no less material to me  
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate  
Of that dark hour.

They make their exit. Macbeth expresses his gratification at the result of the conference:

It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight,  
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night.

Macbeth's soliloquies reveal in him a gradual and consistent development in wickedness. Before murdering Duncan he questioned, vacillated, experienced a severe mental and emotional struggle. In the case of Banquo his decision is quickly made, his plans promptly and carefully matured, and executed without wavering. ✓

A further evidence of this Character-Growth is that in the case of Banquo he acted alone. Lady Macbeth was *particeps criminis* in the murder of Duncan. Of that of Banquo she was ignorant until after its commission. Macbeth has attained his majority in crime; he stands and walks and acts alone.

In another room in the castle Lady Macbeth in a soliloquy gives expression to sentiments which are similar to those just uttered by Macbeth. She, like him, realizes the danger that threatens them from the loyal and suspicious Banquo, and from his son Fleance. Macbeth now enters. She perceives he is conscience-stricken; is the victim of fear and remorse. She disguises her own feelings, and immediately attempts to cheer him:

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making;  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard: what 's done is done.

Macbeth in his reply reveals the terrible mental and emotional strain to which he is being subjected, and also his knowledge of the danger that menaced them.

We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it:  
She 'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice  
Remains in danger of her former tooth.  
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds  
suffer,  
Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep  
In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
That shake us nightly; better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further.

Lady Macbeth tries to soothe him. She urges him  
to

. . . sleek o'er your rugged looks;  
Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

He then refers to the banquet, and requests Lady Macbeth to give Banquo a prominent seat thereat:

Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue.

While there is grave danger to be apprehended from Banquo and Fleance, Macbeth tells his wife:

There 's comfort yet; they are assailable;  
Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown  
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons  
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums  
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.

When she inquires more particularly as to his plans, he affectionately, yet firmly, declines to answer:

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,  
Till thou applaud the deed; *seq.*

The next Scene is very brief. It describes the murder of Banquo and escape of Fleance. As they were returning from their ride they were *set upon* in *A Park near the Palace*. In order to make *assurance double sure* Macbeth had dispatched a third murderer to join the other two. Who he was we know not. It may have been Macbeth himself. More likely it was simply a confidential and trusty follower.

Notwithstanding all his carefulness the plot was only partially successful. As the third murderer describes it:

There 's but one down; the son is fled.

To which the second murderer responds:

We have lost  
Best half of our affair.

The Climax ends with the banquet at which the nobles of Scotland have gathered to do honor to their new King and Queen. They have hardly taken their seats at the table when the *First Murderer appears at the door*. He informs Macbeth that Banquo's *throat is cut*, and that *Fleance is 'scaped*. The effect of this news on Macbeth is instant, profound. In an *aside* he says:

Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears.

A moment later he adds:

There the grown serpent lies; the worm that 's fled  
Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  
No teeth for the present.

He disturbs the feast. Lady Macbeth gently chides him.

The Ghost of Banquo enters, and sits in Macbeth's place. Without waiting for it to charge him with the murder Macbeth addresses it:

Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.

Lady Macbeth begs the company not to note him, and then in a tone sharp and decisive, like the explosion of a bomb, says to Macbeth:

Are you a man ?

Macbeth is entirely unnerved, and on the reappearance of the Ghost says:

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!  
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with: *seq.*

Again the Ghost vanishes. Lady Macbeth dismisses the guests. She does not chide or taunt her husband. Rather she soothes him. Macbeth's composure returns.

The Climax ends with a reference to Macduff, which points to him as the one by whom the Resolution of the drama is to be effected. ✓

*Macb.* How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
At our great bidding?

*Lady M.* Did you send to him, sir?

*Macb.* I hear it by the way; but I will send:  
There 's not a one of them but in his house  
I keep a servant fee'd.

Shakespeare then, in a conversation between Lady Macbeth and her husband, gives us one more glimpse into the mind and soul of Macbeth. His plans and his emotional condition are revealed.

*Macb.* I will to-morrow,  
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:  
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good  
All causes shall give way: I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er:



Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;  
Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

*Lady M.* You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

*Macb.* Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse  
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:  
We are yet but young in deed.

The murder of Banquo, the escape of Fleance, is the acme of the Climax. Macbeth's *vaulting ambition*, which, up to this time, has steadily moved upward, reaches its highest point, *o'erleaps itself and falls on the other*.

In this play Shakespeare follows his usual method and puts the Climax at the centre of the play. It is the habit of thoughtless critics to decry Shakespeare's architectonics, to assert that in his plays the Plot is secondary. Shakespeare was a great artist, and he instinctively recognized the fact that in a drama, as in every other art-product, structure is organic. In it the *imagination bodies forth the forms of things unknown*. Between the thought and the form in which it is bodied forth, the connection is vital, essential. An analysis of Shakespeare's plays reveals the fact that most of them, notably those which were written in the maturity of his powers, are, in the highest degree, artistic and symmetrical. They balance around a common centre. This is literally true of *Macbeth*.

I.—The acme of the Climax is near the mechanical centre. The divisions of this play, as they are found in Folio I., are 5 Acts, 28 Scenes, 2114 verses.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As there is no line numeration in Folio I., I give that of the Cambridge edition.

The murder of Banquo, the escape of Fleance, which is the acme of the Climax, are very near to the exact centre of the play. They are at the end of Act III., Scene 3, that is, the middle of the middle Act, the end of 14 out of 28 Scenes, at verse 1034 out of 2114 verses. The play, therefore, is perfectly symmetrical, for "symmetry is an effect produced by a figure when all its parts on one side of a line, drawn perpendicularly through its central point, balance those on the other side of this line."<sup>1</sup> This effect was not attained by Shakespeare as the result of careful reckoning. Shakespeare was writing a great play, and writing it very hurriedly. The Plot, in every part, manifests intelligent design and is well-nigh perfect. Its perfection is manifested, amongst other things, by the location of the Climax. In placing this where he did, Shakespeare was guided not by any mathematical calculation, but by his poetic insight, his dramatic genius.

Genius has been scientifically defined by Hartmann as "the activity and efflux of the intellect freed from the domination of the conscious will."<sup>2</sup> In perfect accord with this is Socrates' dictum in *Ion*.<sup>3</sup> "All good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed." Like Shelley's skylark, the great poet pours out his

. . . full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

<sup>1</sup> Raymond, *Genesis of Art-Form*, pp. 154, 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, translation of Coupland, vol. i. pp. 269-292. Also cf. Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetic*, p. 279.

<sup>3</sup> Jowett, *Plato*, vol. i., pp. 501, 502.

In this play Shakespeare "buildd better than he knew." In placing the Climax near the mechanical centre, he was guided not by calculation but by inspiration.

✓ II.—The centre of the play is also the climax of Lady Macbeth's career. Immediately after the murder of Banquo she retires, and never again appears as an active force in the drama. Her work is ended. Never again does she urge or counsel or aid Macbeth. From this time onward he pursues his career alone. True, the dramatist brings Lady Macbeth forward in the last Act. She, however, is perfectly passive. She is unfitted, both mentally and physically, to do anything. Her warning to Macbeth has been grimly prophetic of her own fate:

These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

✓ Remorse has driven her to insanity. Her mind, which is full of *thick-coming fancies*, recalls the events of the past. Her heart, which is *sorely charged*, finds relief in a sigh which is full of pathos. Death soon after comes to her succor. But long before this she has ceased to take any part in the movement of the drama. The Climax of the play marks also the climax of her career.

III.—The death of Banquo and escape of Fleance is also the climax of Macbeth's life. It is

. . . the highest point of all his greatness;  
And, from that full meridian of his glory,  
He hastes now to his setting.

From this time forward, the action of the drama, so far as it relates to Macbeth, changes its course and moves in another direction. Previously it has been an ascent; subsequently it is a descent. The conspiracy against Banquo and Fleance, which Macbeth intended should carry his fortunes still higher, causes them to decline. Instead of making his position on the throne more secure, as he hoped, it is the beginning of insecurity. This crime carried within itself its own Nemesis. Macbeth perceived this, and when the murderer said to him, *Fleance is 'scaped*, he foresees the danger that that escape presages. He is profoundly disquieted:

But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
To saucy doubts and fears.

These *saucy doubts and fears* were but the foreshadowing of the Catastrophe, which is reached at the conclusion of the drama.

If we examine more in detail the position of this Climax in its relation to Macbeth, we shall find it a marked example of what Swinburne<sup>1</sup> calls Shakespeare's "incomparable instinct for abstinence from the wrong thing, as well as achievement of the right." Most dramatists would have made the coronation the climax of Macbeth's fortune. With that event the predictions of the Weird Sisters have been fulfilled. The ambition of Macbeth has been gratified to the fullest and highest degree. But it is a significant fact that Shakespeare does not make the successful outcome of the plot to seize the

<sup>1</sup> *A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 189.

throne the climax of Macbeth's career. In order to make his fall more profound and fatal, he is allowed to move onward and upward on the path of success. He determines to *make assurance double sure* by murdering Banquo and Fleance. He succeeded in the case of Banquo, failed in that of Fleance; was partially successful, partially unsuccessful. It was the dividing line between this success and this failure which Shakespeare has made the climax of Macbeth's life. Up to this time Macbeth had accomplished successfully everything he had attempted. After this time he fails in everything. Previously, unbroken success, subsequently, unbroken failure, attend him. From this time forth the one effort of his life is to prevent the fulfilment of the Weird Sisters' prediction to Banquo. And everything that he does with this intention not only ends in failure, but also aids in producing that failure. The Climax of this play is the climax of Macbeth's fortunes. And the position of that, not after the seizure of the throne, but after the murder of Banquo, is a marked expression of Shakespeare's genius in constructing the Plot.

FALL

III., 5-IV., *finis*

In his plays Shakespeare in

Every line

Opens, by just degrees, his whole design.<sup>1</sup>

One of their cardinal qualities, as Coleridge has pointed out, is "expectation in preference to sur-

<sup>1</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*.



prise. It is like the true reading of the passage, 'God said, Let there be light, and there was *light*'; not there *was* light. As the feeling with which we startle at a shooting star, compared with that of watching the sunrise at the pre-established moment, such and so low is surprise compared with expectation."<sup>1</sup> In this play the great dramatist makes the transition from the Climax to the Fall unforced and gradual by means of an episode. In it every incident tends directly toward a gradual unfolding of the Plot.

The beginning of the Fall of this play (so much as is contained in III., 5 and 6, and IV., Scene 1, to line 135) is an episode. The movement of the action is suspended. It is technically a Return or Revolution. It is both retrospective and prospective. It may be divided into two parts:

I.—The return of the Witches, who had disappeared at the beginning of the action, and Macbeth's interview with them.

II.—The conversation between *Lennox and another Lord* (III., 6), in which the events of the forepart of the drama are rehearsed, and those of the latter part are foreshadowed. Shakespeare, by means of this conversation, makes the Plot more lucid and vivid. The memory of the spectator is refreshed, his interest is intensified.

In the re-introduction of the Witches, and in the conversation between *Lennox and another Lord*, Shakespeare again makes use of Repetition, Alteration, Alternation.

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Bohn's edition, p. 237.



The play opens with the appearance of the Witches. As the result of their prediction to Macbeth, the Main Action begins and progresses to a Climax. That having been reached, they now appear a second time to Macbeth, *at the pit of Ach-eron*. On the conclusion of this second interview the movement of the drama is resumed, and proceeds rapidly and uninterruptedly to the Catastrophe.

The conversation between *Lennox and another Lord* is also an example of Repetition, Alteration, Alternation. Lennox rehearses the events of the fore part of the drama; he repeats his *former speeches*, but with an alteration. This speech has been so misunderstood that critics have rejected it as an interpolation. In my judgment, it is undoubtedly authentic. It is, and was intended by Shakespeare to be, ironical.<sup>1</sup> While Lennox voices the current rumors which point to Malcolm and Donalbain as the murderer of Duncan, and to Fleance as the murderer of Banquo, he really expresses the utter unreasonableness of these suspicions. As a result of that, the hearer is led to recognize the real murderer in Macbeth.

The gracious Duncan

Was pitied of Macbeth: marry, he was dead:  
And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late,  
Whom, you may say, if 't please you, Fleance kill'd,  
For Fleance fled: men must not walk too late: *seq.*

Lennox, having thus referred to the past, and thrown a flood of light on it, now directs attention

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Moulton, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, pp. 128, 129.

to the future, and foreshadows the outcome of the drama. As Duncan is dead, his son,

From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth,  
looms up as the hope of

This our suffering country  
Under a hand accursed!

Associated with him in this work is to be Macduff. Malcolm and Macduff thus become the complementary characters to Duncan and Banquo. When the latter are removed by violent deaths, the former appear. Duncan and Banquo were the principal characters in the Sub-Action of the fore part of the play. Malcolm and Macduff fill the same position in the after part of the drama, and are the principal agents in producing the Catastrophe.

The most important part of the Fall is Macbeth's interview with the Witches (IV., 1). As before remarked, they appear on two separate occasions: once at the opening of the play, before the Main Action begins; again, at the conclusion of the Climax, while the Main Action has been temporarily stopped, and before the Fall and Catastrophe commence.

Their relation to the drama is restricted to their speeches. They perform no deeds, they take no direct part in the movement of the action. Their function in the play is limited to words. And yet, as King Henry VIII. says, while

Words are no deeds,  
'T is a kind of good deed to say well.

The converse of this is true: to say ill is a kind of bad deed. The latter is true of the Witches. Their words are a kind of ill deed, the influence of which is both malign and potent. The truths they have conveyed to Macbeth become to him the

. . . happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme.

When, in a letter, Macbeth reports their prophecy to Lady Macbeth, she is

Transported beyond  
This ignorant present, and feels now  
The future in the instant.

Unlike Macbeth, she has not seen, she has not heard the Weird Sisters, and yet, at the very beginning of the play, she is brought under their influence. And that influence surrounds and dominates her as long as she takes an active part in the drama. Immediately on the receipt of Macbeth's letter, she recognizes the situation:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor;  
and then instantly resolves,

And shalt be  
What thou art promised.

The message of the Witches on their first appearance was not restricted to Macbeth. They also addressed Banquo. The effect of this Banquo reveals in his soliloquy:

Thou hast it now : King, Cawdor, Glamis, all ; *seq.*

As the indirect result of the Witches' prophecies, the Main Action of the drama begins and moves forward to its Climax. After that, during an episode, while the movement is temporarily stopped, the Witches again appear, and as the consequence of the words uttered to Macbeth at this interview, the action again begins, and moves forward to the end of the Catastrophe.

The relation in which the Witches stand to the drama is what is technically known as the *Environing Action*. Although they appear but seldom,—only on two occasions,—and although they do nothing, yet their presence seems to hover around the Macbeths, and to exert on them an influence which is continuous, powerful, pernicious, fatal. The prophecy made by them to Macbeth develops in him the determination to seize the crown. After Duncan has been murdered, and Macbeth is seated on the throne, he recalls the words addressed by the Witches to Banquo:

He chid the sisters, *seq.*

The result of Macbeth's reflection is:

It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight,  
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night.

Banquo was murdered. But even then there is no cessation to the puissant and malign influence of the Witches. Macbeth says:

I will to-morrow,  
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters;  
More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst.

This second interview takes place and its result was, as described by Hecate, to

Draw [Macbeth] on to his confusion:  
He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace and fear:  
And you all know security  
Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

All of this was literally fulfilled. When Macbeth was informed of the advance of the English power, he said:

Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:  
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,  
I cannot taint with fear. What 's the boy Malcolm?  
Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know  
All mortal consequences have pronounced me thus:  
"Fear not, Macbeth; no man that 's born of woman  
Shall e'er have power upon thee'" Then fly, false  
thanes,  
And mingle with the English epicures.

When Macduff informs him that he *was from his mother's womb untimely ripped*, the truth dawns on Macbeth.

Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,  
For it hath cow'd my better part of man!

He becomes furious, desperate:

Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,  
And thou opposed, being of no woman born,  
Yet I will try the last.

Thus, like a soldier, fighting bravely and defiantly, Macbeth died. And all the while, from his first appearance to his death, more or less, under the influence of

. . . these juggling fiends, . . .  
That palter with us in a double sense;  
That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
And break it to our hope.

The thanes fly from him. He defies fate.

The mind I sway by and the heart I bear  
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

. . . . .  
I will not be afraid of death and bane  
Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

Hardly were these words uttered when a Messenger reported :

As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought  
The wood began to move.

Not till he heard this did he begin to *sag with doubt*. Then he said :

I pull in resolution and begin  
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth; " Fear not, till Birnam wood  
Do come to Dunsinane " : and now a wood  
Comes toward Dunsinane.

His courage, however, revives. At the very last, when he meets Macduff on the battle-field, he defies him :



Thou lovest labour:

As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air  
With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed:  
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;  
I bear a charmed life, which must not yield  
To one of woman born.

The Weird Sisters from the very opening to the conclusion of the play hover around. Without taking any direct part in the action, simply by their words they exert an influence which, while invisible, is all-powerful. They aid indirectly in bringing the drama first to a Climax, afterward to a Catastrophe. They constitute in this play the *Environing Action*.

Still another dramatic function is performed by them. Speaking of them, Banquo said:

If there come truth from them—  
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—  
Why, by the verities on thee made good,  
May they not be my oracles as well  
And set me up in hope?

The Oracular Action was a favorite device of the Greek dramatists. It was founded on the belief that destiny ruled the universe, and that the revelation of this destiny was made by oracles, *e. g.*, Oracle of Delphi. These revelations were very deceptive. They were true, but were so disguised as to be mysterious and misleading. They were riddles. A perfect example of the oracular drama is the *Œdipus* of Sophocles. What the oracle was in the Greek dramas, that the Weird Sisters were

in this play. There was nothing comic or grotesque about them. They who so think entirely misconceive them. They were the personification of *fate and metaphysical aid*. They were weird, terrible, sublime.

It is doubtful if Shakespeare ever read a single Greek drama, so that in introducing Oracular Action into this play he was not a servile imitator of the Greek dramatists. Rather he based his method on human experience, on the uncertainty and mystery which attend the life of every one. Hamlet expresses the idea:

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,  
When our deep plots do pall; and that should teach us  
There 's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will.

The oracular announcement made by the Weird Sisters to Macbeth was twofold:

I.—He should be King. II.—He should be succeeded by Banquo's issue.

The first had been fulfilled. Macbeth devotes all his energies to prevent the fulfilment of the second. He meets the Weird Sisters and propounds the one question which torments him:

Shall Banquo's issue ever  
Reign in this kingdom ?

They reply, reply truly (for every prediction is fulfilled literally), and yet Macbeth is deceived. Their words are ironical. They say one thing, they mean another. This is a characteristic of the oracle.

It is always in the form of irony. The honest and true Banquo recognized this quality in the first message:

But 't is strange;  
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's  
In deepest consequence.

A profound irony permeates the very structure of this drama. Macbeth was deceived and betrayed. He

laughed to scorn  
The power of man.

Great Birnam wood shall never come to high  
Dunsinane hill, for

Who can impress the forest, bid the tree  
Unfix his earth-bound root?

The result is he

tells pale-hearted fear it lies,  
And sleeps in spite of thunder.

This second message of the Weird Sisters is oracular. It foretells; it is true; it deceives. Macbeth, under its influence, is lulled into that *security* which

Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

Urged onward by its impetus, with his demoniac ambition intensified to the degree of desperation, he starts forward on the course of conduct which ends in the failure of all his plans, and in his own

death at the hand of the very man against whom the Weird Sisters had warned him, and whose life he attempted to destroy.<sup>1</sup>

No sooner had the Witches vanished than Lennox enters and informs Macbeth, *Macduff is fled to England*. Macbeth instantly resolves:

The castle of Macduff I will surprise;  
Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
That trace him in his line.

The action of the drama, which had been stopped from the close of the Climax, III., 4, to IV., 1, is now resumed. The conversation between *Lennox and another Lord*, the appearance of the Weird Sisters, had constituted an Episode. On the conclusion of that, the movement begins again with the murder of Lady Macduff and her Son.

Following this is Scene 3, which is the last of Act IV., and the last of the Fall. It also is an Episode. In fact, the action of the drama, which from the beginning of the Growth to the end of the Climax had been regular and swift, has been suspended during the Fall, with the single exception of the murder of Lady Macduff and her Son. Notwithstanding this lull, there has been passive or artistic progress. This is one function of the Episode. By it, as by

<sup>1</sup> "But when we in our viciousness grow hard—  
O misery on 't' the wise gods seel our eyes;  
In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us  
Adore our errors; laugh at 's, while we strut  
To our confusion."

*Antony and Cleopatra*, III., 13, III, seq.

an easy and progressive transition, the drama passes from the intense excitement of the Climax to that of the Catastrophe. The Fall from beginning to end is weird, sombre, gloomy. It suggests to the imagination of the spectator a swiftly coming *dies iræ*. It is darkened with the shadows of the impending Catastrophe, of which it is the precursor, which it ushers in. The murder of Lady Macduff and her Son, perpetrated by Macbeth with the avowed purpose of averting the fulfilment of the oracles, is the immediate and fruitful cause of the Catastrophe.

In the concluding part of the Fall (IV., 3), the scene of the drama is transferred to England. There a conversation is held between Malcolm and Macduff. As a result, Malcolm's suspicion of Macduff is allayed. The former decides to set forth for Scotland. Just after that decision is reached, and before it results in action, the news is brought by Ross to Macduff:

Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes  
Savagely slaughter'd.

✓ This act, introduced by Shakespeare at the very conclusion of the Fall, becomes the immediate cause of the Catastrophe. It causes revolt in Scotland. It stimulates Malcolm's desire for revenge:

Let 's make us medicines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

It becomes *the whetstone* of Macduff's sword:

But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself:

Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too!

The result is, as Malcolm says:

This tune goes manly.

Come, go we to the King; our power is ready;  
Our lack is nothing but our leave; Macbeth  
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above  
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may:  
The night is long that never finds the day.

Thus ends the Fall, the fourth division of the play. In a perfectly constructed drama, the conclusion of the Fall is always some act which directly and quickly causes the Catastrophe.

In this study I intentionally restrict myself to the broad outlines of the subject. In the Fall are two facts which, while they are minor and subsidiary, throw so much light on Shakespeare's architectonics that I think this study would be incomplete without brief reference to them. They are: The introduction of Macduff's Son; the exit of Lady Macduff, crying "Murder."

The introduction of Macduff's Son is one of those subtle touches manifesting the finest artistic sense. It is illuminative. The innocent and guileless boy forms a perfect contrast to the guilty and crafty Macbeth, who had just resolved to *make assurance double sure*, by murdering Macduff and his family. This determination had no sooner been formed than it was executed. The firstlings of Macbeth's heart had become the firstlings of his hand. His emissaries appear and murder the boy. Thus, *at one fell*



*swoop*, this man who *has no children* destroys all Macduff's *pretty ones*. As a flash of lightning on a stormy night

Unfolds both heaven and earth,  
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold!"  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up,

making that darkness more profound and gloomy, so does Shakespeare by the introduction of this child bring into bolder relief the blackness of Macbeth's heart.

Lady Macduff was not murdered on the stage. Of the eleven violent deaths recorded in the play, only two (those of Macduff's Son and Young Siward) occur in presence of the audience. The execution of Cawdor is announced by Malcolm. Neither Duncan nor Banquo was murdered on the stage. Nor were the grooms. Lady Macbeth committed suicide in the privacy of her own apartment. Macbeth meets his fate at the hands of Macduff, unseen by the audience.<sup>1</sup> The spectators of the drama became cognizant of these violent deaths only through narration. The channel through which the facts were conveyed was not visual, but aural; not the eye, but the ear. Shakespeare shrunk from presenting them to view. They were not scenically enacted. Rather he left them to the imagination, and thereby appealed to the

<sup>1</sup> There is a stage direction in the First Folio (*Tragedies*, p. 151), as follows: "Enter Fighting, and Macbeth slaine." A little farther on, still on the same page, is another: "Enter Macduffe; with Macbeth's head." I accept the latter as more correct, and upon it base the opinion expressed above.

interpretative sympathy of the spectators. In this he conforms to one of his own qualifications of *an excellent play, viz.*, that it be *set down with as much modesty as cunning*. Shakespeare's technique in this respect was similar to that of the Greeks.<sup>1</sup> It was also in direct contrast to that of his contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> It combines exquisite refinement with the acme of strength; to borrow his own simile, it is like *a dewdrop on a lion's mane*. In this he reveals the hand of the master. Coarseness in the drama, as in every form of art, implies crudeness.<sup>3</sup> "All great art is delicate art, and all coarse art is bad art."<sup>4</sup> The bloody and repulsive details being veiled, these deaths cease to be shocking, and become terrible.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the minor as in the major details of dramatic construction, Shakespeare manifests technical perfection.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lessing, *Laokoön*, chaps. ii., iii., xii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lowell, *Old English Dramatists*, p. 71, *seq.*; Saintsbury *History of Elizabethan Literature*, p. 395.

<sup>3</sup> But yet let nothing on the stage be brought  
Which better should behind the scenes be wrought;  
Nor force th' unwilling audience to behold  
What may with grace and elegance be told.  
Let not Medea, with unnatural rage,  
Slaughter her mangled infants on the stage;  
Nor Atreus his nefarious feast prepare,  
Nor Cadmus roll a snake, nor Progne wing the air;  
For while upon such monstrous scenes we gaze,  
They shock our faith, our indignation raise.

Horace, *Ars Poetica*.

<sup>4</sup> Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. iii., p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> "Imagination defies the bare fact, but creates the fearful feeling."—Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. ii., p. 110.

## CATASTROPHE

## V

Lady Macbeth disappeared at the conclusion of the Climax. At that time her work in the drama was completed. She is not visible during the Fall. At the beginning of the Catastrophe she reappears. She is the same, and yet how changed! During the Banquet Scene she was every inch a queen, strong, dominant, masterful. At the same time she was the loyal, loving wife, to the last degree solicitous for her husband's welfare. After this she disappears, and nevermore takes an active part in the action of the drama. When Shakespeare brings her on the stage again (V., 1) she is an utter wreck, physically, mentally, morally.

She is troubled with thick-coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.

Her reason is dethroned, her strong will is broken.  
Her

Intellectual power, through words and things,  
Went sounding on a dim and perilous way!

Her mind wanders automatically over the events of the past. She is a nature in ruins.

At first thought it seems impossible that the Lady Macbeth of the Banquet Scene, manifesting therein such a queenly, such a wifely character, could change into the Lady Macbeth of the Catastrophe. One is led to ask, Has not Shakespeare, in this changed condition of Lady Macbeth, violated

the primal law of a drama, *viz.*, that it be organic ? If Lady Macbeth had revealed her whole character in the Banquet Scene, the answer would certainly be in the affirmative. But she did not do this. "Variations there are of temperature in the finest season; and the truest heart has not always the same pulsations." <sup>1</sup> No more, I may add, has the falsest heart. Aristotle says some characters, to be represented with uniformity, must be represented as ununiform.<sup>2</sup> This Shakespeare has done in the case of Lady Macbeth. He shows us in the Banquet Scene the gracious queen, the loyal wife. But there is another and dominating quality of her nature,—that which was described by Malcolm in the words, *fiend-like queen*. The Lady Macbeth of the Catastrophe is the *fiend-like queen* of the fore part of the play. In two brief verses Shakespeare, by a masterly stroke, reveals this fact. The Doctor says:

Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds  
Do breed unnatural troubles:

In these words the connection between the *unnatural troubles* of the Catastrophe and the *unnatural deeds* of the Growth and Climax is traced by Shakespeare. The flower does not grow more naturally from the root, nor the river flow from the spring, than does the Lady Macbeth of Act V. develop from

<sup>1</sup> *Landor*, edited by Colvin, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> "The fourth [requisite of Manners] is uniformity; for even though the model of the Poet's imitation be some person of ununiform manners, still that person must be represented as uniformly ununiform."—*Poetics*, part ii., chap. xv., p. 144, Twining's translation.

the same lady of Acts II. and III. The after part of this play is, in every detail, the outgrowth of the fore part. The latter is in living, vital, organic connection with the former.

But more, Shakespeare has made the two parts of the play (I am referring only to Lady Macbeth's part therein) Complement and Balance each other with absolute perfection. An examination of the subject in detail will reveal this. The Catastrophe of this play is for Lady Macbeth a catastrophe in the literal meaning of that word, *viz.*, an overturning. The change in her condition from the close of the Climax till her appearance in the Catastrophe is most grave and momentous. It reveals the intense mental and moral struggle through which she has passed. It foretokens the final outcome of that struggle. Yet it is not an unnatural, therefore not inartistic, change. It is progress in the line of development. To avoid a surprise which, by diversion, would lessen the strain of the spectators, Shakespeare prepares for that change by a brief conversation between a Doctor and a Waiting Gentlewoman. I have said the movement of the Catastrophe must be rapid. Shakespeare's dramatic construction conforms to this requisite. He never asks the spectator to sympathize long with waning fortunes, with *ebb-ing men*. He does not long delay an impending judgment. In this conversation, which extends to but a few lines, Lady Macbeth's changed condition is foreshadowed. Thus, by "divinity of skill," manifesting the nicest gradation, Shakespeare prepares the spectator for the final appearance of Lady

Macbeth. As this conversation is drawing to a close she appears in a *slumbry agitation*. She enters alone. So did she at the beginning of the play. She bears in her hand a taper. The Gentlewoman informs us *she has light by her continually*. At her first entrance she had uttered this invocation :

Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell.

That prayer has been answered. A darkness which is physical, mental, moral, has enveloped her, and has become so agonizing that she finds it unendurable. *Hell is murky ! As some relief, she has light by her continually ; 't is her command. She rubs her hands. It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands.* After the murder of Duncan, looking at her terror-stricken husband and then at her bloody hands, she said :

My hands are of your colour ; but I shame  
To wear a heart so white.

. . . . .  
A little water clears us of this deed :  
How easy is it then !

But as she learns, or, rather, manifests (her reason is dethroned, she learns nothing), *washing her hands* even perseveringly (*I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour*), it is not so easy to wash away the blood and *clear us of this deed*. The first words she utters lead us to infer the *spot* is not on her hands, but in her mind, on her heart. *Yet here 's a spot.* Notwithstanding her most persistent



washing, and her strongest conjuration, *Out, damned spot! out, I say!* the spot remains. She realizes this. *What, will these hands ne'er be clean?* Then, with a sort of intensified sensitiveness, she attributes to the blood not only *color*, but also *odor*.<sup>1</sup> *Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.*

This woman, in whose nature there is not

as small a drop of pity  
As a wren's eye,

does not weep. Rather, like Isabel, in Marlowe's *Edward II.*, her

Eyes, being turned to steel,  
Would sooner sparkle fire than shed a tear.

But her *sorely-charged heart*, filled with anguish, intense, acute, finds relief in *a sigh*, which is full of tragic pathos. What a revelation does that sigh make! It is one of "those passionate convulsions when our human nature, like the sea in earthquake, is sucked away deep down from its habitual shores, leaving bare for a moment slimy beds stirring with loathsome life, and weedy tangles before undreamed of, and instantly hidden again under the rush of its reaction."<sup>2</sup> In like manner, this sigh reveals to us the abysmal depths of Lady Macbeth's personality, wherein is raging one of those *greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Nothing awakens a reminiscence like an odor."—Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, Jean Valjean, book 9th, chap. iv.

<sup>2</sup> Lowell, *Old English Dramatists*, p. 102.

<sup>3</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, I., 2, 154.

Once more her *mind diseased* reverts to the haunting and unforgettable deeds of the past. Again she refers, this time in imagination addressing her husband, to this spot of blood: *Wash your hands*. But to no effect. All great Neptune's ocean cannot wash the blood clean from her hand, for the blood is not on her *little hand*, but in her distempered imagination, on her violated conscience. Her mind then reverts to her final interview with her husband just previous to Duncan's murder:

Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account?

These words sound as if they had been uttered at that interview. On that occasion she had said:

Art thou afeard

To be the same in thine own act and valour  
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
And live a coward in thine own esteem?

She then refers to Duncan: *Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?* Doubtless she recalled the venerable old man, who resembled her father, and the blood with which she had gilded the faces of the grooms, *For it must seem their guilt*. Then, for the nonce forgetting that fatal night, she recalls the murder of a woman: *The Thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?* She thus reveals her guilty knowledge of that murder, and recalls the deed to the memory

of the spectator. Her unanswered question appeals to the imagination and lifts the veil which separates this world from

The undiscover'd country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns,

and out of whose silence no reply to her question is heard. The Banquet Scene and Banquo's murder are then referred to:

I tell you yet again, Banquo 's buried; he cannot  
come out on 's grave.

But he does come out of his grave, and haunts not only Macbeth, as he did at the Banquet, but also, in this final stage of her career, Lady Macbeth.

With the exception of these brief allusions to Lady Macduff and to Banquo, every word Lady Macbeth utters in this final soliloquy refers directly to that dark night, with its darker deeds, on which Duncan was murdered. At the last, by a sort of irresistible impulse, her delirious mind reverts to that subject. The last words she speaks point directly to Duncan's murder:

To bed, to bed! there 's knocking at the gate; come,  
come, come, come, give me your hand. What 's done  
cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed!

The utterances are a perfect echo of Lady Macbeth's words spoken immediately after Duncan had been slain:

I hear a knocking,  
At the south entry: retire we to our chamber:  
. . . . . Hark! more knocking.

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us  
And show us to be watchers. Be not lost  
So poorly in your thoughts.

And later:

How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard: what 's done is done.

Then Lady Macbeth makes her exit, to be followed  
shortly after by her exit from the world's stage.  
Shakespeare prepares us for her violent death. The  
Doctor, most delicately foreshadowing suicide, says:

Look after her;  
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,  
And still keep eyes upon her.

There are but two more references to her. Macbeth inquires:

How does your patient, doctor?

The Doctor replies:

Not so sick, my lord,  
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,  
That keep her from her rest.

To this diagnosis of the Doctor, Macbeth unintentionally, indirectly, but with unerring accuracy, adds another:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,  
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote

Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart ?

A little later there is heard a cry of women within.  
Macbeth asks Seyton :

Wherefore was that cry ?

Seyton replies :

The queen, my lord, is dead.

Unable longer to bear her agony, she

by self and violent hands  
Took off her life.

She dies by suicide.

In this brief scene, containing but eighty-eight lines, Shakespeare uses the word *hand* no less than six times. This is one of those verbal felicities ("winged words," as Homer describes them) in the use of which Shakespeare reveals his expressional potency, his mighty power of pictorial speech. The hand is the instrument by which the intellect gives form and shape to its conceptions; it is the minister by which the mandates of the will are executed. Shakespeare, by his oft-repeated use of that word in this Scene, manifests "the power of poetry, which is, by a single word perhaps, to instil that energy into the mind which compels the imagination to produce the picture."<sup>1</sup> Lady Macbeth's reference to her hands, which is echoed by the Doctor and the Gentlewoman, recalls the daggers which those hands had placed in position :

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge, *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Bohn's edition, p. 138.

I laid their daggers ready;  
He could not miss 'em;

and to the bell which those hands rang, and which signified to Macbeth that everything was in readiness; and also to the fact that, after the murder, those same hands

Gilded the faces of the grooms withal;  
For it must seem their guilt.

These guilty hands have now become Lady Macbeth's Nemesis. Conscience makes them the instrument of punishment, and this doubly. On the last night Lady Macbeth's wandering mind returns again and again to them, and to the blood thereon. Later by these same hands she *took off her life*. Thus Duncan's murder is revenged on Lady Macbeth, and by the self-same hands that laid the daggers ready.

By an inexorable law, which applies both to nature and to art, effects follow causes, penalty is the result of transgression. Lady Macbeth's sufferings, which are terrible and fatally destructive, are but the legitimate result of that consecration to crime which expressed itself in the invocation, one of the most appalling in all literature:

Come, you spirits; *seq.*

This night on which Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep is but the counterpart of that other night so fatal to Duncan. The thoughts which flit through her *brain-sickly* mind are but the reflections of the



deeds done on that night. Duncan's murder is revenged by the suicide of Lady Macbeth. And by a poetic justice, which is both morally and artistically perfect, Shakespeare makes the murderer in the latter case the woman who instigated and planned, and with *fell purpose* urged forward to completion, the murder of Duncan. The woman who rang the bell, of which Macbeth said:

the bell invites me.  
Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell,

is the same who by

self and violent hands  
Took off her life.

Shakespeare's portrayal of Lady Macbeth's character in the Catastrophe, in every particular, Complements and Balances the same in the Growth and Climax. All the factors in the former blend perfectly with those in the latter. The effect, viewing the play as a whole, is completeness and equilibrium. Thus we perceive Shakespeare's Dramatic Construction reveals perfect Complement and Balance, and, resulting therefrom, perfect Symmetry.

What is technically the Central Point of the Catastrophe, so far as that relates to Macbeth, is the battle-field situated between Dunsinane Castle and Birnam Wood. At the conclusion of the Fall (IV., 3), Malcolm said:

This tune goes manly.  
Come, go we to the King; our power is ready;

Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth  
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above  
Put on their instruments.

The march toward Scotland is immediately begun.  
Menteith (V., 2) informs us:

The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,  
His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff.

To join them the Scotch thanes who have revolted  
*march towards Birnam*; there, as Caithness says:

Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal,  
And with him pour we in our country's purge  
Each drop of us.

In Dunsinane Castle, on the edge of this field, Macbeth is intrenched. Thus toward this battle-ground everything in the Catastrophe converges. It is the focal point to which the thoughts of the spectator are directed. On it Macbeth and his army meet Malcolm, Siward, the English forces, the Scotch rebels. On it is fought the battle which brings death to Macbeth, revenge and an earldom to Macduff, the throne to Malcolm, and the play to an end.

In this respect, the conclusion of the play Complements the beginning. In the Introduction the scene is *A Camp near Forres*. There is a description of a battle between the rebels, led by *the merciless Macdonwald*, and Duncan's army, led by *the brave Macbeth*. This is followed quickly by another combat:

No sooner justice had with valour arm'd  
Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels,  
But the Norwegian lord surveying vantage,

With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men  
Began a fresh assault.

Macbeth is again victorious, and shortly after appears in this drama. Thus his life as portrayed in this play is rounded with a battle. It begins, it ends, on the battle-field. What is true of his part in the play is true of the drama as a whole: it commences and concludes with a battle. In this respect, the Introduction and the Catastrophe Complement and Balance each other.

In order to judge accurately Shakespeare's construction of the Catastrophe so far as it relates to Macbeth, and to determine whether the play is one organic whole, it is necessary to trace in detail his development of the character of Macbeth.

Before the play opens *vaulting ambition* had suggested to Macbeth succession to the throne. This became to him so real, vivid, potent, that he spoke of it to Lady Macbeth. In this frame of mind, returning with Banquo from a victorious campaign he meets the Witches. They hail him *thane of Glamis! thane of Cawdor!* and *king hereafter!* They touch a responsive chord in him. The Witches disappear. Ross and Angus, messengers from Duncan, immediately arrive and inform Macbeth the King has appointed him *thane of Cawdor*. This news enkindles his ambition to a feverish, to a murderous degree. It takes the form of a

suggestion

Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of nature.

That *suggestion* is definitely described :

My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smothered in surmise.

He is not, however, ready to yield to that *suggestion*. He decides on inaction.

If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me,  
Without my stir.

Shortly after this, Duncan appoints Malcolm Prince of Cumberland, which title carries with it the right of succession. The effect on Macbeth's mind was instant, powerful. He reaches the decision to

let that be  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

This but inaugurates a severe and prolonged struggle in Macbeth's nature. After mature consideration of the question, Macbeth decides to *proceed no further in this business*. He yields, however, to the tempter in the person of Lady Macbeth, and murders Duncan. This was the first of a long list of murders. It was perpetrated only after a struggle between right and wrong, between conscience and an unscrupulous ambition. This conflict was so sharp and protracted that it stirred Macbeth's nature to its profoundest depths.

The murder of Duncan was followed by that of the Grooms. In this case there was no hesitancy. The deed was done quickly, on the impulse of the moment.

The next step in Macbeth's career was the murder of Banquo and attempted murder of Fleance. This manifests marked progress in crime. Here there was no wavering, no irresolution, as in the case of Duncan; nor was it performed under the influence of a sudden impulse. It was premeditated, deliberate, carefully contrived.

The fourth stage in this criminal career is reached when Macbeth's

nature is subdued  
To what it works in.<sup>1</sup>

Then he accepts his environment and adapts himself thereto:

I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

Without any compunction, and with the utmost deliberation, he consecrates his future to crime:

Strange things I have in head that will to hand,  
Which must be acted ere they may be scanned.

This resolution is immediately carried into action. He murders Macduff's wife and children. Murder has now become his principal occupation. He revels, he gloats in it.

The final stage in Macbeth's development in crime, that which is portrayed in the Catastrophe, is homicidal mania. Caithness describes it:

<sup>1</sup> *Sonnet CXI.*

Some say he 's mad; others that lesser hate him  
Do call it valiant fury.

Macbeth's soul is agitated. He feels himself in the presence of fate. For him, to quote his own words uttered just previous to the murder of Banquo:

Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood:  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse.

One after another unfavorable reports are brought to him. The thanes fly from him; the English force approaches; the Queen dies; Birnam Wood begins to move; the *leavy screens are thrown down* and reveal the English forces, led on by Malcolm, Siward, Macduff, and re-enforced by the Scotch thanes. Macbeth manifests a coolness and desperation born of impending doom:

The mind I sway by and the heart I bear  
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

He makes ready to contend with destiny for his life. His courage, however, is not that of the man strong in the right, who *hath his quarrel just*, but rather of him who hath defied the right and knows doomsday has come. He is desperate:

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
But, bear-like, I must fight the course.

The imprisoned, pent-up forces of his nature find vent in an intense and fiery ebullition:



Blow, wind! come, wrack!  
At least we 'll die with harness on our back.

Once or twice, however, there have been what I may term moral reactions. They are expressions of that trait in his nature which he manifested just after he had murdered Duncan. Fresh from that deed, with his hands still covered with Duncan's blood, he told his wife:

One cried, "God bless us!" and "Amen!" the other;  
I could not say, "Amen!"

And then he seemed astonished that he could not pronounce that word, that it *stuck in his throat*. In all literature I know no more perfect example than this of moral perversion. It is the very lunacy of a distempered conscience. Macbeth seemed to be utterly blind to the incongruity between his deed and such a prayer.

In this respect, Macbeth was unlike Lady Macbeth. Never once in the course of the drama did she utter a syllable expressive of regret or despair. Her iron will, her remorseless ambition, from the beginning to the end, assert their supremacy, and to the very last continue the conflict with her moral nature. Eventually retribution comes. It is sudden, fatal. It is an insanity which ends in suicide. Macbeth, on the other hand, is at times controlled by a better nature. Conscience warns. He hesitates to do wrong. He regrets a wrong done. He wishes Duncan could awake from his sleep of death. He sleeps

In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
That shake us nightly.

Out of the depths of an agonized heart he cries:

O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!

These feelings, however, are but temporary, and  
soon

are quelled

Beneath a mightier, sterner stress of mind.<sup>1</sup>

The conflict between his better and his worse nature continues to the end. The voice of conscience becomes fainter, the moral nature becomes weaker, but still the former is heard, the latter asserts itself.

At the close of his career, Macbeth's deeds sit heavy on his soul. Angus says:

Now does he feel

His secret murders sticking on his hands;  
Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;  
Those he commands move only in command,  
Nothing in love: *seq.*

Macbeth's own words after he is informed of the flight of the thanes and the appearance of the English force reveal to us the deep despondency, the overwhelming sense of loneliness, which fill his agitated soul:

Seyton!—I am sick at heart,  
When I behold—Seyton, I say!—This push  
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.

<sup>1</sup> Landor, *Count Julian*.

I have lived long enough: my way of life  
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;  
And that which should accompany old age,  
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.  
A little later, Lady Macbeth's death is announced.  
He again gives expression to blank despair and desolation:

I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,  
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.

His anguish becomes intolerable. Suicide, the last resort of those whose sufferings are excessive, whose hopes are extinct, suggests itself. His despair, however, is majestic. Without hesitancy or parley he rejects the suggestion:

Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
On mine own sword? Whiles I see lives, the gashes  
Do better upon them.

Unlike Lady Macbeth, he neither becomes insane nor commits suicide. In thus portraying the last experiences of this man and this woman, Shakespeare has been true to nature. The mighty oak which stands upright and does not bend to the hurricane, is suddenly uprooted and overthrown. The willow which bends and sways, yielding to the force of the tornado, withstands the cyclone.

The battle is fought. Macbeth kills Young Siward, and in turn is slain by Macduff. Thus he dies fighting, a death befitting a brave soldier.

All true justice, poetic as well as moral, is "the absolute art of measured recompense."<sup>1</sup> In the soliloquy uttered before the murder of Duncan, Macbeth had expressed this thought:

But in these cases  
We still have judgment here; *seq.*

This is fulfilled in Macbeth's own experience. Between his sin and its retribution the balance is perfectly preserved. The murderer of Duncan and of Banquo is allowed to fill out the measure of his bloody career by the pitiless and inhuman slaughter of Macduff's wife and children. By a poetic justice which is perfect, Nemesis comes in the person of Macduff. It was Macduff who induced Malcolm to march into Scotland at the head of the English force; who inaugurated and took an active part in the campaign that followed; who met and slew Macbeth. Thus he revenged the murders of Duncan and Banquo; revenged Malcolm's wrongs; revenged the murder of his own wife and *pretty ones*. He was the active agent in producing the Catastrophe, and afterward in bringing the Catastrophe, and with it the play, to a conclusion.

In the play, Shakespeare also brings to a fitting dramatic close the career of Malcolm. After Macbeth had murdered Duncan and seized the throne, Malcolm, the son and heir, fled to England. From that time until near its very close he has taken no part in the action of this drama. He disappears during the Growth. During the Climax and Fall

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, Brantwood edition, p. 106.

he is absent. He reappears in the Catastrophe. The throne, which had been unlawfully seized by Macbeth, now falls into the possession of its rightful owner. Malcolm now, after a long interval of time, obtains the throne, and is hailed by Macduff and all, *King of Scotland*.

Aristotle says the object of tragedy is to effect, "through pity and terror, the correction and refinement of those passions."<sup>1</sup> A freer translation of Aristotle's words is, "producing, by [the stimulation of] pity and fear, the alleviating discharge of emotions of that nature."<sup>2</sup>

In his *Politics*, Aristotle speaks of purifying the passions. The passage throws a side-light on the above quotation from the *Poetics*, and enables us to apprehend Aristotle's meaning. The word he uses in the *Politics* is *Katharsis*, literally "purifying." The æsthetical use of *Katharsis* he compares to musical cures effected by playing very exciting flute music as a palliative for morbid excitement of the mind. According to Lessing,

Aristotle intends to insist on the essential interconnection of sympathy and fear, in the sense that our feeling of a common nature and possibilities shared by ourself and the person in the drama awaken in us the thought of our own participation in that human destiny which can do such things as we see.<sup>3</sup>

Professor Mahaffy's exposition of Aristotle's dictum, which is in harmony with that of Goethe, is,

<sup>1</sup> *Poetics*, part ii., section ii., p. 116, Twining's translation.

<sup>2</sup> Bosanquet, *History of Æsthetic*, p. 64. <sup>3</sup> *Idem.*, p. 236.

not that tragedy has a moral use, but an æsthetical purpose:

That human pleasures and human griefs, apart from their moral side, though not in conflict with it, require to be raised and purified; and just as we train the taste of the eye by ideal pictures and by the study of exceptionally beautiful scenery, so the compassion and the fear of the ordinary citizen may be purified by showing him higher and nobler objects for its exercise.<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact, a great tragedy appeals both to the moral and to the æsthetical nature, and, by exercising, purifies them. It therefore seems to me likely that Aristotle referred to both.

A most exhaustive, profound, and lucid explanation of Aristotle's words is that of Dallas:<sup>2</sup>

Why are pity and terror selected as, above all others, the tragic emotions? How do we get at these two and shut out the rest? . . . There is some disparity between the words pity and terror, which goes to veil the true significance in tragedy of the things they stand for. Thus, pity is the emotion of a spectator at the grief which he sees in another; it is sympathy with grief. Terror, on the other hand, stands equally for terror and sympathy with terror. We have no special term for sympathy with terror, as we have for sympathy with grief. Therefore, for the sake of exactness, and that the words may go perfectly in pairs, let us fall back on a circumlocution. It will then appear that, according

<sup>1</sup> *History of Classical Greek Literature*, vol. ii., p. 407.

<sup>2</sup> *The Gay Science*, vol. ii., pp. 53, 54.



to Aristotle's famous definition, the object of tragedy is to produce the pleasure of sympathy with grief, and of sympathy with terror. And then, also, we are in a position to see that this analysis of painful emotion is exhaustive, and to present the definition of tragedy as follows: It is the object of tragedy to excite pleasure through a discipline of pain. But pain is either of the known or of the unknown. As of the known, it awakens grief; as of the unknown, fear. The one is a painful feeling based on experience; the other a painful feeling born of anticipation. And, therefore, all the painfulness of the passions with which tragedy has to do must work up either to pity or to terror; that is, to sympathy either with the known or with the unknown of pain.

Professor Woodberry's interpretation of this much-disputed dictum of the Stagirite, while not so subtle as that of Dallas, is scholarly and luminous:

It is not credible to me that painful emotion, under the illusions of art, can become pleasurable in the common sense; what pleasure there is arises only in the climax and issue of the action, as in case of the drama when the restoration of the order that is joyful, beautiful, right, and wise occurs; in other words, in the presence of the final poetic justice or reconciliation of the disturbed elements of life.<sup>1</sup>

It is the mission of a great tragedy, as of every great work of art, to stimulate both sensation and perception, and to produce, as a result thereof, emotion. It makes one feel, feel deeply, intensely, and

<sup>1</sup> *Heart of Man*, p. 153.

through the whole gamut of the emotions. It brings one into sympathy not with real but with fictitious passion, which has been made real by the imagination. Its primary function is to evoke and intensify pity and fear. A profound feeling is elemental, like fire or water, and, like them, sublime, even if perverted. The raging torrent, the consuming fire, even though destructive, are magnificent. So the portrayal in a tragedy of a great passion delivers the soul from its debilities. It dispels emotional torpor, exercises the feelings, particularly those of pity and fear, and has the effect, described by Aristotle, of correcting, refining, stimulating them. This drama performs this function. It portrays the mighty and prolonged struggle of two strong natures who defied the eternal laws of right. With all its varying phases of success and failure that conflict is described. As it progresses, the drama becomes more and more impassioned. As it nears the conclusion, in the description of the violent deaths of Lord and Lady Macbeth, it becomes inexpressibly pathetic, reaches a tragic exaltation which is sublime. It appeals to and stimulates pity and fear, both "with the known and the unknown of pain"; and, in this respect, it is in conformity with the canons of art.

A great drama is also organic. In this, likewise, its artistic perfection is manifested. From the first line of the Introduction to the last line of the Catastrophe it is one living whole. The Catastrophe is not artificial, forced, arbitrary. The characters and fates of the Macbeths as portrayed in the

Catastrophe are not such because Shakespeare has so willed. They are the natural and inevitable fruit of the deeds described in the Growth, Climax, Fall. The doom which befell the Macbeths is in strict accord with the universal law that everything must bear fruit after its kind. Rebellion has begotten rebellion, murder has generated murder. "This perpetual relation of the events with the characters is the principle of dramatic poetry. Whatever results to the hero is the fruit of his own acts." <sup>1</sup>

Thus, studying this drama from the standpoint of its construction, we recognize in it an example, well-nigh perfect, of Shakespeare's architectonics. It touches the very summit of intense dramatic presentation. It is a masterpiece.

<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *Æsthetics*.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MERCHANT OF VENICE <sup>1</sup>

#### INTRODUCTION

I., I, 2.

NO one of Shakespeare's plays is more popular than the *Merchant of Venice*. None is more misunderstood. The opinion is almost universal that the Main Action is the loan made by Shylock to Antonio, and the consequences thereof. This opinion is wholly mistaken. The error is the result of two causes: ignorance of dramatic construction, and the conventional method of staging the play. The star actor in the cast almost always assumes the character of Shylock. This gives that character the primary position in the presentation, and exaggerates its importance.

The Main Action of this drama is the wooing of Portia by Bassanio, and all the consequences thereof. If Bassanio had not been in love with Portia and desired to win her hand in marriage the loan of Shylock to Antonio would never have been

<sup>1</sup> This study of the *Merchant of Venice* was originally published in *Werner's Magazine*. It is republished here by permission of the Edgar S. Werner Publishing and Supply Co., New York.

made. Antonio borrowed the *three thousand ducats* from Shylock for one and only one purpose, *viz.*, to enable Bassanio to go to *Belmont, to fair Portia*.

The Main Action of a drama bears the same relation to all other parts of the play that the spinal column does to all the other parts of a man's body. The Main Action is the backbone of a play. Everything in the play is dependent upon, subsidiary to that. In the *Merchant of Venice*, the loan of Shylock to Antonio, the wooing of Gratiano and Nerissa, of Lorenzo and Jessica, which are Sub-Actions, are the result of, are dependent upon, are inextricably connected with, the wooing of Bassanio and Portia. Had it not been for the latter no loan would have been made; Gratiano would not have met and wooed Nerissa, nor would Jessica have *become a Christian* and Lorenzo's *loving wife*. The Main Action of the play, therefore, is the wooing of Portia by Bassanio, and everything else in it is secondary thereto, and is the result thereof.

The play opens by presenting to us a group of three men, Antonio, Salarino, Salanio. After a brief conversation they are joined by Bassanio, the *most noble kinsman* of Antonio, Gratiano, and Lorenzo. The arrival of the last three is followed almost immediately by the exit of Salarino and Salanio. Having made an engagement to meet Bassanio at dinner, Gratiano and Lorenzo shortly after retire. Antonio and Bassanio are thus left alone. They then hold a conversation, with which the Scene concludes.

I. Antonio is sad. All the others are merry.

Antonio was not a cynic. On the contrary, he was genial, kindly, lovable, loving. Between him and these young men there was a strong bond of friendship. To Salarino he said:

Your worth is very dear in my regard.

When Bassanio said to Antonio

. . . from your love I have a warranty  
To unburden all my plots and purposes,

the latter, without a moment's delay, and like the honorable man and true friend he was, replied:

And if it stand, as you yourself still do,  
Within the eye of honour, be assured,  
My purse, my person, my extremest means,  
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

Antonio was not only loving, he was also lovable. His affection was reciprocated. Gratiano said:

I tell thee what, Antonio—  
I love thee, and it is my love that speaks.

Bassanio acknowledged his great indebtedness to Antonio both *in money and in love*. Antonio's sadness, therefore, was not like that of Jacques, cynical; or like that of Macbeth, the outgrowth of a selfish, unloving, diabolic nature. Nor was it caused by anxiety about his merchandise, or by being in love, as Salanio and Salarino thought. Neither was it an affectation of wisdom as Gratiano said.



It was not *the scholar's melancholy, which is emulation, nor the musician's, which is fantastical, nor the courtier's, which is proud, nor the soldier's, which is ambitious, nor the lawyer's, which is politic, nor the lady's, which is nice, nor the lover's, which is all these.*<sup>1</sup> It was a presentiment of coming trouble. It was derived from *some forefather grief*. In its nature it was similar to that of the Queen of Richard II., who said :

. . . methinks,  
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,  
Is coming towards me, and my inward soul  
With nothing trembles.<sup>2</sup>

Antonio's sadness was a vague apprehension of future distress. It was the shadow of a coming and painful event. Its dramatic purpose was to foreshadow the tragic in the play.<sup>3</sup>

The group of young men by whom Antonio is surrounded in this Scene is jolly, careless, merry. Bassanio's first words, addressed to Salanio and Salario as they are about to retire, are: *Good signiors both, when shall we laugh?* Bassanio and his friends

<sup>1</sup> *As You Like It*, IV., I., 10, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> *Richard II.*, II., 2, 9, *seq.*

<sup>3</sup> Antonio's treatment of Shylock, which was insulting, harsh, almost cruel, is not inconsistent with this estimate of his character. Antonio's conduct toward Shylock was the result of a just and intense indignation awakened by the latter's treatment of helpless debtors.

"I oft delivered from his forfeitures  
Many that have at times made moan to me."

Indignation and wrath toward inhumanity are but the converse of love toward benevolence,

form a marked contrast to Antonio. By means of them Shakespeare betokens the joy and happiness which are portrayed in the drama, and with which it ends. In four verses Shakespeare with unerring skill touches these two chords, sad and merry, which are to vibrate through the play:

Then let us say you are sad,  
Because you are not merry; and 't were as easy  
For you to laugh and leap and say you are merry,  
Because you are not sad.

The sad Antonio, the merry young men, introduced to us in this opening Scene, both embody and foretoken the tragic and the comic in the play.

II. Antonio was a rich merchant. The young men, without exception, were impecunious. They were poor, improvident, prodigal. Every one of them, if candid, could have made a statement similar to that of Bassanio:

'T is not unknown to you, Antonio,  
How much I have disabled mine estate,  
By something showing a more swelling port  
Than my faint means would grant continuance.

Lorenzo, Gratiano, when they wooed, could have said as did Bassanio:

Gentle lady,  
When I did first impart my love to you,  
I freely told you, all the wealth I had  
Ran in my veins, I was a gentleman.

Hence the young men attributed Antonio's sadness to the dangers which threatened his argosies :

I know, Antonio  
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

When Antonio assured them they were mistaken, they immediately jumped to the conclusion :

Why, then you are in love.

In this conversation the action of the drama is foreshadowed. The Main Action is the love affair of Bassanio and Portia. The principal Sub-Action is the loan of three thousand ducats, and the tragic outcome of that loan. Thus, we perceive the Main and the principal Sub-Action refer to love and money. In the first Scene of the Introduction those subjects are referred to, commented on, and impressed on the mind of the spectator.

III. The most important factor in this Scene is Bassanio's conversation with Antonio. It is in direct connection not only with the Main Action, but also with the principal Sub-Action. Both are the outcome of it. This conversation is first retrospective. Antonio opens it by asking a question :

Well, tell me now what lady is the same  
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,  
That you to-day promised to tell me of ?

Bassanio, after describing his insolvent condition said :

In Belmont is a lady richly left;  
 And she is fair and, fairer than that word,  
 Of wondrous virtues: sometimes from her eyes  
 I did receive fair speechless messages:  
 Her name is Portia, nothing undervalued  
 To Cato's daughter, Brutus' Portia:

. . . . .  
 O my Antonio, had I but the means  
 To hold a rival place with one of them,  
 I have a mind presages me such thrift,  
 That I should questionless be fortunate!

In these lines the Main Action is clearly foreshadowed. Antonio's suggestion, which is in reply, is the source of the principal Sub-Action:

Try what my credit can in Venice do:  
 That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,  
 To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.  
 Go, presently inquire, and so will I,  
 Where money is, and I no question make  
 To have it of my trust or for my sake.

In this Scene the hero, his kinsman Antonio, and his young friends are introduced. All that it is necessary the spectator should know, both of Antonio's and Bassanio's past, is related. The future experiences of each are foreshadowed. The Scene closes with arrangements for securing the loan necessary to enable Bassanio to woo Portia.

Shakespeare now transfers the scene of the drama from Venice to *Belmont*. *A room in Portia's house.* The principal female characters in the play, Portia

and Nerissa, enter. The first words uttered by Portia, like those spoken by Antonio, express weariness, unrest:

By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary of this great world.

Portia's feeling is hardly one of sorrow. It is not so pronounced as that. Rather it is a sweet, dainty, sentimental melancholy, born of that unsatisfied longing of her nature to love and to be loved. This she reveals a moment later, when she says:

But this reasoning is not in the fashion to choose me a husband.

The artistic effect of Portia's, like Antonio's, opening words is twofold: by means of them the tragic in the play is foreshadowed; also, the happiness pervading the latter part of the play is brought into bolder relief and made more vivid. "The true nurse of light is in art, as in nature, the cloud; a misty and tender darkness, made lovely by gradation."<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare in the Introduction of this play conforms to this law of Nature and of Art. By a skilful use of Gradation and Contrast, the weariness and sadness pervading the Introduction contrast with the gladness and joy of the Catastrophe. The result is, the latter are made more radiant.

Portia describes her body as *little*. This is one of those minor touches in which Shakespeare manifests his genius. He possessed a most vivid perception of the connotive as well as the denotive effect

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Lectures on Art*, Brantwood edition, p. 205.

of words. "The power of poetry," says Coleridge, "is, by a single word perhaps, to instil that energy into the mind which compels the imagination to produce the picture."<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare frequently by the use of an adjective manifests the power of poetry to stimulate the imagination. Prospero, describing to Miranda the ill-treatment of his brother, said:

. . . one midnight  
Fated to the purpose did Antonio open  
The gates of Milan, and, i' the dead of darkness,  
The ministers for the purpose hurried thence  
Me and thy crying self.

What more perfectly could suggest a picture of helpless and suffering infancy than the word *crying*? Lady Macbeth in the agony of remorse says:

All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

Immediately the imagination conceives a woman, not large, gross, Amazonian, but small, delicate; one whose crimes, therefore, are all the more appalling. Shylock describes his hate toward Antonio as a *lodg'd hate*. That adjective defines with the utmost accuracy the nature of Shylock's antipathy to Antonio. Amongst the first words Portia utters are *my little body*. The phrase, which in itself is very descriptive, becomes all the more forceful by contrast with *this great world*. Portia's description of herself leads us to imagine her as small, gentle,

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Bohn's edition, p. 138.



refined, and in every way feminine. So far as her physical nature is concerned, she is a counterpart of Imogen, of whom Iachimo said:

All of her that is out of door most rich!

To return from this digression: at the beginning of this Scene the chord of sadness is just touched by Portia when Nerissa tells us all that it is necessary to know of Portia's circumstances. She is rich, her good fortunes are abundant. Portia's reply to Nerissa reveals herself as not only pensive and romantic, but also practical. She utters a word, *Choose*, that is to resound all through the play. Again and again does Shakespeare repeat this word in this Scene. The Scene is brief, but *choose* occurs in it ten times, and the cognate word *chosen* once. Every time it is repeated it points to the three caskets on which are the inscriptions:

"Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire";  
"Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves";  
"Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."

Thus by iteration and reiteration of this word the mind of the spectator is directed to the caskets, the choice of one of which by Bassanio forms the Climax of the play.

Nerissa then refers to the will of Portia's father, and asks,

But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

Portia's reply to this question, which constitutes the

largest part of this Scene, is important for two reasons, *viz.*, (1) it describes her suitors; (2) it indirectly describes herself.

The suitors come from Italy, Germany, France, England, Scotland. The character of each is discerned by Portia by means of that perfect intuition which woman possesses, and in the exercise of which she is so superior to man. The Neapolitan is a horseman and nothing more. *He doth nothing but talk of his horse*. The only accomplishment of which he can boast is *he can shoe* the horse. The County Palatine is grim, gloomy, *he doth nothing but frown*. *He smiles not*. Humor is an absolute requisite of a sane mind. Shakespeare endows his perfect characters with it. Portia possessed it in a highly developed degree. Her analysis of the wooers is keen, thoughtful, accurate; at the same time it is suffused with a humor which is subtle, delicate. The Frenchman is superficial, weak. His accomplishments are limited to dancing, fencing. *If a throstle sing, he falls straight a capering: he will fence with his own shadow*. Falconbridge lacks individuality. The Scotchman is unmanly. The German is gross. These suitors are all deficient in those qualities which constitute the ideal husband. They lack cultured intellects, strength of will, nobility of nature, refinement, loveliness. Portia rejects them all. *There is not one among them but I dote on his very absence*, she says.

Portia's description of her suitors is also a revelation of herself. Our opinions are reflexes of ourselves. If Portia had been attracted to these lovers

she would have been more or less like them. Rejecting them, she proves thereby she is unlike them. This is the law of sympathy. There can be no love without sympathy. Falstaff knew this, and was shrewd enough to pretend that his feigned love for Mistress Page was based on sympathy:

Ask me no reason why I love you; for though Love use Reason for his physician, he admits him not for his counsellor. You are not young, no more am I; go to then, there's sympathy: you are merry, so am I; ha, ha! then there's more sympathy: you love sack, and so do I; would you desire better sympathy?

Thus Falstaff, although gross, unloving, hypocritical, was shrewd enough to recognize the fact that sympathy is an essential quality of love, and was cunning enough to pretend to Mistress Page that his simulated affection for her was based on sympathy. Portia, speaking of the bond of love which existed between Antonio and Bassanio, infers therefrom that the former must be like the latter:

For in companions  
That do converse and waste the time together,  
Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,  
There must be needs a like proportion  
Of lineaments, of manners and of spirit;  
Which makes me think that this Antonio,  
Being the bosom lover of my lord,  
Must needs be like my lord.

Portia's reasoning was strictly correct. As love between two persons proves there must be sympathy

between them, so also is the converse true. Dislike between two persons manifests a lack of sympathy. Hence, Portia, in rejecting these suitors, reveals herself as being unlike them. These men, whose intellects are vapid, whose tastes are gross, sensuous, are repellent to this woman whose intuitions are unerring, whose intellect is cultured, and whose *passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love*.

There was, however, one other suitor, and to him Portia was attracted. Nerissa asked her :

Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquis of Montferrat ?

Portia did remember him. *It was Bassanio*. Then Nerissa said :

He, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes looked upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

Portia endorses this opinion :

I remember him well, and I remember him worthy of thy praise.

The attraction of this couple to each other seems to have been immediate. Prospero's description of the love of Ferdinand and Miranda applies equally well to that of Bassanio and Portia :

At the first sight  
They have chang'd eyes.

While Portia did not speak with her lips, she did with her eyes. They involuntarily, instinctively, disclosed to Bassanio her passion. He said to Antonio:

Sometimes from her eyes  
I did receive fair speechless messages.

The attraction was also mutual. Bassanio said of Portia:

In Belmont is a lady richly left;  
And she is fair and, fairer than that word,  
Of wondrous virtues.

While Portia did not in words tell Bassanio of her sentiments, she did tell Nerissa, and at the same time ourselves, by echoing Nerissa's praise of him.

The flower is potentially in the seed. From the nature of the seed we can infer with unerring accuracy the species of the flower. The law of Nature that every living thing must "bear fruit after its kind" applies equally to Art. If this play is perfect, the Portia of the Climax and the Catastrophe must be the same as the Portia of the Introduction, only developed, matured, perfected. This she is. The Portia whose *little body is aweary of this great world*, who abides faithfully by the restrictions of her father's will, who is dissatisfied with all of her wooers except Bassanio, and who remembers him as *best deserving a fair lady* is potentially the wise, gracious, soulful, queenly woman who becomes the wife of Bassanio, and the saviour of Antonio.

The Scene ends with the departure of the re-

jected suitors, and the announcement of the coming of a fifth, the Prince of Morocco.

The Introduction of this play is composed wholly of conversation, narration. Nothing has been done. In Scene 1 only men were introduced, in Scene 2 only women. Omitting further reference to Scene 1, in Scene 2 all that it is necessary for us to know of Portia's past and present history, her wealth, her father's will, her wooers, is revealed. The future is foreshadowed. The word *choose* points to the caskets. The opinion of Bassanio, expressed by Nerissa, and endorsed by Portia, indicates him as the successful chooser. That choice is the Climax of the play, and upon it the success of the drama hinges. This Scene, and also the Introduction as a whole, are closed by the shutting of the gates of Portia's mansion at Belmont upon the departing suitors. When they are reopened for the entrance of the Prince of Morocco, the action of the drama, so far as Portia is a factor therein, begins.

Such is the perfect Introduction. It is both retrospective and prospective. Detail after detail, each one of which is apposite, is mentioned with a cumulative effect. Omit one of them and the Introduction would become imperfect, as much as the removal of a petal from a flower, a note from the song of the bird or from a symphony, would mar the perfection and beauty of the flower, the song, the symphony. "Beauty," said Michelangelo, "is the purgation of superfluities." Each word, each sentence in this Introduction is necessary to its perfection, and each, like the stars appearing one



after another in early evening, contributes its ray of light.

The Introduction if complete must not only appeal to the intellect, it must also stimulate the emotions. The *merry and sad* are but the precursors of the tragic and the comic which permeate the play. They foreshadow the fiendish malignity of Shylock, the acute and pathetic suffering of Antonio, the joy of the three pairs of happy lovers, which, in each case, finds its consummation in marriage.

Thus Shakespeare, the artist, follows the method of the Creator. Art imitates Nature. The coming storm is presaged by rolling thunder, dark, threatening clouds. The bright, sunshiny day is heralded by the aurora.

#### THE ARGOSIES

Before proceeding to study the Growth, the next division of the drama, I wish to consider Antonio's argosies.

It is a canon of Art that there must not be in the finished product any factor, no matter how trivial, how insignificant, which does not in some way, to some degree, conduce to the general effect. When applied to a drama this means there must be no lay figure, no action, no word, which does not aid in producing the Catastrophe. In this play Shakespeare has introduced argosies. What is their dramatic function? They constitute the Environing Action.

The Environing Action is not the environment

The latter is the local color, the pervasive atmosphere, the general conditions surrounding a drama. It pertains to topography, or to the period when the action took place, or to social conditions, *e. g.*, intellectual, moral, national. It is to a drama what the setting is to a gem or a story or a melody. Nor, as the term erroneously implies, is the Environing Action an action. It may be defined as an influence, a stimulating circumstance, external to the action of the drama, yet indirectly affecting that action.

While the Environing Action is not the environment, it must be in perfect harmony therewith. In a work of Art there must be harmony of effects. This is one principle underlying the Greek law of Unity. That law was, a drama should be restricted to the portrayal of one action, occurring in one place, and on one day. While in some respects imperfect and misleading, it contained a fundamental truth, *viz.*, that in a drama the environment must be in harmony with the action. Buckingham, speaking of Wolsey, said :

His mind and place  
Infecting one another, yea, reciprocally.

In a drama the environment and the action must be harmonious; between the two there must be a living correspondence, each *infecting one another, yea, reciprocally.*<sup>1</sup>

If Shakespeare had introduced Venetian argosies

<sup>1</sup> " But if in foreign realms you fix your scene,  
Their genius, customs, dialects maintain."

into *Macbeth*, or Scotch witches into the *Merchant of Venice*, he would have violated this canon of dramatic art. He makes no such mistake. On the contrary, the introduction of the argosies as the En-  
vironing Action in this play is in the highest degree artistic, and in thorough accord with the environment. Venice, the scene of the play, was the "Bride of the Sea."<sup>1</sup> She was so called from the ancient ceremony of the doge throwing a ring into the Adriatic Sea, saying as he did so, "We wed thee, O Sea! in token of perpetual domination." She was a great water commonwealth, founded upon numerous islands between which the "many twinkling" waters of the Adriatic ebbed and flowed. She had no broad footing upon the land. She was built on the shifting sands of lagoons and morasses. Her prosperity, her very life, depended on the sea. Her dominion was on the waters. Her navies were at that time, the twelfth and immediately succeeding centuries, the most powerful on earth. Her mariners knew all the coasts of Europe. Before Columbus was born they found their way to Iceland, Labrador, and, it is claimed by some, to Newfoundland. Marco Polo had prayed to St. Mark in Tartary, India, Cathay. At the end of the thirteenth century the golden ducats of Dandolo came into existence. They were carried far beyond the confines of Europe. Clive, after the battle of Plassy, came upon the hoarded treasures of the East, and found ducats carried of old to these distant regions by Venetian traders. Venetian galleys carried wine to England.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dallas, *The Gay Science*, vol. ii., p. 253, *seq.*

On the return voyages they brought iron from Staffordshire, tin from Cornwall and Devon, wool from Sussex. They transported honey to the Scythians; wood to the Greeks and the Egyptians; saffron, oil, linen, to Syria, Persia, Arabia. In a word, the Venetians were in the twelfth century what the English were in the nineteenth, the great carriers of the world. The postal service between Germany and Constantinople was accomplished by Venetian galleys. At that early period the Pope sent a message to the Ducal government, requesting free navigation of the Gulf of Venice. The Doge replied: "Venice, having no lands, depended on the sea; her home and paths were on the deep. It was, therefore, of vital importance to her that the Lion of St. Mark should rule the water." The Pope's request was denied.

The scene of this lovely drama was a maritime republic. In perfect harmony therewith is the Enveloping Action, which is the argosies of Antonio. With the opening words of the Introduction, they are brought to the attention of the spectator. Frequently, as the action of the play progresses, are they referred to. At the end of the Catastrophe, Portia speaks of them to Antonio. All the while do they, as it were, sail on the outskirts of the action of this drama, exerting thereon an invisible, silent, but potent influence.

Salarino, in the opening lines of the play, refers to them as the cause of Antonio's sadness:

Your mind is tossing on the ocean;  
There, where your argosies with portly sail,

Like signiors and rich burghers on the flood,  
Or, as it were, the pageants of the sea,  
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,  
That curtsy to them, do them reverence,  
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

Salanio continues in the same strain, and describes the dangers which threaten them. These dangers are real, and eventually bring to a climax the tragic in the play. This reference to these dangers is intended by Shakespeare to be a premonitory suggestion, a mysterious hint.

After Bassanio has revealed to Antonio his love for Portia, and asked financial assistance to enable him to woo her, Antonio said:

Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea.

The next reference to the argosies is made by Shylock. Bassanio has offered Antonio as security for the loan. Shylock considers Antonio's availability as such:

Yet his means are in supposition: he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis, another to the Indies; I understand, moreover, upon the Rialto, he hath a third at Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squandered abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men: there be land-rats and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves, I mean pirates, and then there is the peril of waters, winds and rocks.

The dangers threatening the argosies, which have already been referred to by Salarino and Salanio,

are here described by Shylock more vividly. These perils, which, up to this time, have been merely unsubstantial, imaginary, now become real. A vessel is lost. Salarino said:

I reason'd with a Frenchman yesterday,  
Who told me, in the narrow seas that part  
The French and English, there miscarried  
A vessel of our country richly fraught:  
I thought upon Antonio when he told me,  
And wish'd in silence that it were not his.

A little later this rumor is reiterated by Salarino, who says:

It lives there [on the Rialto] unchecked, that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wrecked on the narrow seas; the Goodwins, I think they call the place.

This report is confirmed by Salanio:

But it is true, without any slips of prolixity or crossing the plain highway of talk, that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio, . . . hath lost a ship.

What Shakespeare from the beginning delicately foreshadowed has now taken place. *Antonio . . . hath lost a ship.* This was but the beginning of Antonio's misfortunes.

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
But in battalions.

Tubal when in Genoa seeking Shylock's daughter and ducats heard that Antonio



Hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

This is followed very shortly by the sad news conveyed to Bassanio in Antonio's letter:

Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried.

This news, so unexpected, following so quickly Bassanio's good fortune in winning Portia, seems to him incredible. Turning to Salerio, he inquires:

But is it true, Salerio?

Have all his ventures fail'd? What, not one hit?  
From Tripolis, from Mexico and England,  
From Lisbon, Barbary and India?  
And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch  
Of merchant-marring rocks?

Salerio replies, *Not one, my lord*. As a result Antonio's

creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit.

The Climax of the drama has been reached. As a consequence, both the nature and the direction of the action are changed. Previously comic or romantic, it now temporarily becomes tragic. Before it had ascended to the Climax; now it descends to the Catastrophe. Immediately after the reading of Antonio's letter, the Fall, the fourth dramatic division, begins. That, in this play, is very brief, and contains no reference to the argosies. At the beginning of the Catastrophe, the Duke, in his address to Shylock, alludes to them and their loss:

Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,  
That have of late so huddled on his back,  
Enow to press a royal merchant down.

The appeal to Shylock's mercy is in vain. The trial proceeds.

This play is primarily a comedy, and, as such, must end happily. And so it does, not only for the lovers, but for Antonio. When the joyous group assembled in her mansion at Belmont, Portia said :

Antonio, you are welcome;  
And I have better news in store for you  
Than you expect: unseal this letter soon;  
There you shall find three of your argosies  
Are richly come to harbour suddenly.

Antonio replies:

Sweet lady, you have given me life and living,  
For here I read for certain that my ships  
Are safely come to road.

Thus, these argosies are, in this drama, the En-  
vironing Action. They sailed away from Venice  
before the action began. Again and again do we  
hear of them as the action progresses. On the con-  
clusion of that action, they return. They are inani-  
mate. They have not done, they could not do  
anything. Yet their influence on the Main and  
Sub-Actions of the drama has been subtle, diffused,  
continuous, puissant. Their loss, or reputed loss,  
brought the principal Sub-Action to a climax. That  
was their mission. For that sole purpose were they

introduced by Shakespeare. When that was accomplished, they subverted no further dramatic purpose, and, as Portia announces to Antonio:

Three of your argosies  
Are richly come to harbour suddenly.

#### THE GROWTH

#### I., 3-II., 6.

The Growth of this play begins with the conversation between Bassanio and Shylock in reference to the loan. That conversation is the direct result of a previous one, the recital of which Shakespeare has given in Scene 1. Toward the close of that Scene Bassanio had appealed to Antonio for financial assistance to enable him to woo Portia. Antonio cheerfully and promptly responded:

Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;  
Neither have I money nor commodity  
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;  
Try what my credit can in Venice do: *seq.*

Bassanio did go forth, and made the trial of what Antonio's *credit* could *in Venice do*. Scene 3 opens with a description of Bassanio's effort.

The Growth of a drama begins with the commencement of the action. It is described by Freytag as "the arousalment." In this play, the first thing done is the contraction of the loan. Hence, the beginning of that act is the boundary line between the Introduction and the Growth.

In a drama Complication begins with the Growth. It marks the commencement of the *desis*, the Complication or involution of Plot. The moment Antonio signs the bond he places himself in jeopardy. So real, so potent, is this danger, so quickly does it assert itself, that the current of Antonio's life immediately changes. Prosperity gives way to adversity. The princely merchant becomes the bankrupt debtor. The tragedy in the play is the outgrowth of the loan.

Complication in the Growth of this play is further manifested by the entrance of Shylock. With his appearance begins what may be described as the Jew side of the action. The latter is a Sub-Action. The Main Action is the love affair of Portia and Bassanio. All characters connected with that are brought forward in the Introduction. Shylock, Jessica, the loan, the elopement, the trial, and everything relating to these persons and events are Sub-Actions. With their entrance the two stories, that of Bassanio and Portia, that of Shylock and the loan, meet for the first time. As a consequence, Complication ensues. As in this play, so in every drama, Complication and Growth are concurrent.

In no division of the drama more than in the Growth does the poet manifest invention. The following characters which first appear in the Growth are Shakespeare's own creation: The Prince of Morocco, Launcelot Gobbo, Old Gobbo, Jessica. Further, every incident in the Growth, except the bare fact of the loan, is original with Shakespeare.

The first words uttered by Shylock: *Three*

*thousand ducats, well*, touch one of the chords that vibrates through the play. In considering Scene 1, I called attention to a group consisting of Antonio, the rich merchant, surrounded by several young men, every one of whom was poor. The latter attributed Antonio's sadness to dangers threatening his argosies, and afterward to his being in love. Shakespeare thus foreshadowed the principal motive of the drama, love; and also a subsidiary one, money. Shylock in his opening sentence touches the latter chord. He reveals himself as the money-lender, the money-lover. Yet he was not a miser. He was more avaricious than miserly. He loved money, but that was not the only, or the all-absorbing, passion of his nature. He never apostrophizes his wealth as does Barabas in Marlowe's *Few of Malta* :

Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,  
 Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,  
 Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds,  
 And seld-seen costly stone of so great price,  
 As one of them indifferently rated,  
 May serve in peril of calamity  
 To ransom great kings from captivity.  
 This is the ware wherein consists my wealth;  
 Infinite riches in a little room.

Shylock mourned the loss of his ducats, his diamond, his turquoise ring, *and other precious, precious jewels*, but he never apostrophized them. In him fanaticism, vindictiveness, were as highly developed, as overmastering, as avarice. When he first sees Antonio, he reveals, in an *Aside*, his real nature :

How like a fawning publican he looks! <sup>1</sup>  
 I hate him for he is a Christian,  
 But more for that in low simplicity  
 He lends out money gratis and brings down  
 The rate of usance here with us in Venice.  
 If I can catch him once upon the hip,  
 I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.

In court he refused Bassanio's offer of

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Moulton (*Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, pp. 61, 62) says: "No commentator has succeeded in making intelligible the line 'How like a fawning publican he looks,' as it stands in the text at the opening of Shylock's soliloquy. The expression 'fawning publican' is so totally the opposite of all the qualities of Antonio that it could have no force even in the mouth of a satirist," *seq.* He proposes to solve the difficulty by assigning this line to Antonio, and supposing it to be spoken of Shylock. Prof. Moulton is entirely correct in the opinion that as a description of Antonio it is incorrect. Antonio was not a *publican*, much less a *fawning publican*. He was the princely merchant, the loyal, loving, generous friend. He was, as Bassanio described him:

"The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,  
 The best-condition'd and unwearied spirit  
 In doing courtesies; and one in whom  
 The ancient Roman honour more appears  
 Than any that draws breath in Italy."

Is not the cause of Shylock's mistaken judgment of Antonio the fact that he judges Antonio by himself? Has not personal equation led Shylock astray? The latter is coarse, unrefined, ungentle, and, therefore, is unfitted to discern clearly or to describe truthfully a good, refined, gentle man. That delicacy and refinement, both of thought and feeling, which characterized Antonio, and which are the result of high birth and good breeding, seemed to Shylock, as they always do to coarse natures, weakness. Hence, judging Antonio by himself, Shylock describes him as a *fawning publican*. Shakespeare thus makes Shylock, as by a reflected light, reveal himself.



twice the sum: if that will not suffice,  
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,  
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart.<sup>1</sup>

This is not the action of a man in whom every emotion is secondary to a love of money. Shylock was not a miser. Nor has Shakespeare ever portrayed a miser.<sup>2</sup> In this he manifests, negatively, his genius. He depicts those qualities only which are essential, fundamental, eternal, the perennial beneath the deciduous, in human nature. The love of money which is so highly developed as to make a man a miser is not such. It is rather incidental, factitious, abnormal. A miser, both mentally and emotionally, is unbalanced. He is insane. Hence, among all the creations of Shakespeare there is no miser. Shylock was not that. He loved money. Equally strong with this love, if not more so, were his fanaticism, his desire for vengeance.

Antonio and Shylock do not meet here for the first time. They had long known each other. Nor were they friends. On the contrary, they were foes. Antonio had spurned Shylock. As a result, Shylock bore toward Antonio an *ancient grudge*. On this occasion Antonio opens the conference by some remarks on the subject of interest:

Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow  
By taking nor by giving of excess,  
Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,  
I 'll break a custom.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also III., 2, 280, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Coleridge, *Lectures on Shakespeare*, Bohn's edition, p. 99.

The discussion on interest which follows manifests vividly Shakespeare's skill in dramatic construction. One of the stories which he dramatized in this play was, "Of a Jew, who would for his debt have a pound of the flesh of a Christian." This story seems so brutal, so inhuman, as to be unnatural. It is a canon of Art that the dramatist must "the probable maintain."<sup>1</sup> The problem with Shakespeare was how to use this story in such a way that he could maintain the probable, and avoid alienating the sympathy and interest of the spectators. In order to effect this he prefaces the introduction of the story by the discussion on the subject of interest. So skilfully is this done that when Shylock proposes the bond with the forfeit of a pound of flesh, Antonio considers it an expression of kindness:

Content, i' faith: I 'll seal to such a bond  
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

This opinion Antonio reiterates after Shylock's exit:

Hie thee, gentle Jew.  
The Hebrew will turn Christian: he grows kind.

Bassanio has a similar opinion of Shylock's offer. Speaking of that he says, *This were kindness*. To be sure, later, when he hears of the bond and forfeit, he demurs:

You shall not seal to such a bond for me:  
I 'll rather dwell in my necessity.

<sup>1</sup> Horace, *Ars Poetica*.

After Shylock has retired he adds:

I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.

He has misgivings as to Shylock's candor, Shylock's motive, but of the proposal itself he makes no question. The latter Bassanio describes—and as he is conversing with Antonio alone, Shylock having left, he would speak with perfect frankness—as *fair terms*.

Shylock's offer was to loan the money, without interest, but on these terms:

Go with me to a notary, seal me there  
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,  
If you repay me not on such a day,  
In such a place, such sum or sums as are  
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound  
Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

This proposition seems to us cruel, fiendish, full of sinister presentiments. Why did Antonio consider it *kind*, Bassanio describe it as *fair terms*? The answer to that question is revealed by an analysis of the discussion between Antonio and Shylock on the subject of interest, by means of which Shylock led up to this proposal.

As previously stated a play must be in harmony with its environment. It must be studied in the light of the conditions surrounding the action. The opinions expressed by Antonio on the subject of in-

terest were those which were current in Venice in the Middle Ages, the scene and date of this play. Then, and from ancient times, the lending of money on interest, the interest to be paid in current coin, was considered both unfriendly and immoral. The Greek word for interest is *tokos*. That literally means offspring. The word is used in the *Iliad* to describe a child; in the *Odyssey*, an eaglet. Interest, in ancient and mediæval times, meant the product of natural growth, say, of sheep or cattle. From a small flock of sheep, a small herd of cattle, there grew large ones. This increase was considered interest. The argument between Antonio and Shylock was not as to the legitimacy and morality of taking interest,—they agreed on that point: the difference between them was as to what constituted interest. Antonio voiced the opinion on that subject which for ages had been current.

Among the Jews it had always been unlawful to charge usury. "If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury." Aristotle says:

<sup>1</sup> *Exodus* xxii., 25. Cf. also *Leviticus* xxv., 35, 36; *Deut.* xxiii., 19; *Psalms* xv., 5. In the Parable of the Talents, *Matt.* xxv., 14-30, his lord said to the servant to whom one talent had been committed: "Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury." The words translated "with usury" are *sun toko*, the latter being the Greek word for interest. From this it is fair to presume our Lord approved of the taking of money as interest on money. This, however, does not controvert my statement that in His day, and for many centuries previous, it had been, according to Jewish law, both illegal and immoral to charge usury.

The natural riches of all men arise from fruits and from animals. Usury is most reasonably detested, as the increase of our fortune arises from the money itself, and not by employing it for the purpose for which it was intended. For it was devised for the sake of exchange, but usury multiplies it. And, hence, usury has received the name *tokos*, or *produce*; for whatever is produced is itself like its parents; and usury is merely money born of money; so that of all means of money-making, this is the most contrary to nature.<sup>1</sup>

This was the opinion which was current in Greece, and, hence, usurers were considered so obnoxious that the mere fact of being a money-lender, Demosthenes informs us, "was enough to prejudice a man in a court of law, among the Athenians."<sup>2</sup> The sentiment in Rome was similar. "Cicero mentions that Cato, being asked what he thought of usury, made no other answer to the question than by asking the person who spoke to him what he thought of murder."<sup>3</sup> The Fathers of the early Christian Church inveighed against usury and usurers. Hence, in Europe, during the Early and Middle Ages of the Christian era, it was considered unchristian to charge usury for money loaned.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, this business fell wholly into the hands of the Jews.

These sentiments on the subject of interest, so

<sup>1</sup> *Politics*, Book I., chap. x.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, p. 545. Cf. Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. iii., p. 144.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, ninth edition, vol. xxiv., p. 18.

<sup>4</sup> For the opinion on this subject current in England in Shakespeare's day, cf. Bacon's essay, *Of Usury*.

different from those of our day, seem surprising. They are, however, perfectly explicable by the fact that in ancient and mediæval times money was not borrowed to use in legitimate business, but only to relieve pressing necessity. This being the case, the borrower was at the mercy of the lender. As a result, great cruelty was practised. The money-lenders of those times were not like the bankers of our day, but rather like the pawnbrokers. The former, as the latter, were cruel. They personally were odious, their business was disreputable.

In the light of this exposition, and bearing in mind the cardinal fact that in the time of Antonio and Shylock the only interest that was legitimate was not money but the offspring of living things, the discussion between these men becomes intelligible. Antonio described his practice, and by so doing expressed his own and the prevailing sentiment, when he said he did

. . . neither lend nor borrow  
By taking nor by giving of excess.

In order, however, to aid a friend he will depart from his custom so far as to pay interest in money for a loan. Shylock, intending to justify his demand for usury, opens the discussion:

When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep—  
This Jacob from our holy Abram was,  
As his wise mother wrought in his behalf,  
The third possessor; ay, he was the third—

*Antonio.* And what of him? Did he take interest?

*Shylock.* No, not take interest, not as you would say,



Directly interest : mark what Jacob did  
 When Laban and himself were compromised  
 That all the eanlings which were streak'd and pied  
 Should fall as Jacob's hire.

This was a way to thrive, and he was blest;  
 And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.

*Antonio.* This was a venture, sir, that Jacob served for;  
 A thing not in his power to bring to pass,  
 But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of heaven.  
 Was this inserted to make interest good ?  
 Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams ?

*Shylock.* I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast.

The discussion on interest is now temporarily discontinued. Shylock's resentment overcomes him. The odious and insulting treatment which he has received from Antonio is recalled, and, with bitter invective, described by him to Antonio. He concludes by inquiring with mock humility:

Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key,  
 With bated breath and whispering humbleness,  
 Say this:

" Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;  
 You spurn'd me such a day; another time  
 You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies  
 I 'll lend you thus much moneys " ?

Antonio retorts:

I am as like to call thee so again,  
 To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.  
 If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not  
 As to thy friends; for when did friendship take  
 A breed of barren metal of his friend ?

But lend it rather to thine enemy,  
Who if he break, thou mayst with better face  
Exact the penalty.

Shylock now craftily dissembles both his opinion on the subject of interest and his sentiment toward Antonio. He offers to loan the money without usury, and from the sole motive of friendship:

I would be friends with you and have your love,  
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,  
Supply your present wants and take no doit  
Of usance for my moneys, and you 'll not hear me:  
This is kind I offer.

This expression of kindness is reiterated by Shylock:

I say,  
To buy his favour, I extend this friendship:  
If he will take it, so; if not, adieu;  
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.

The effect is exactly what he purposed. Both Bassanio and Antonio consider the offer as *kindness*. Both are deceived. Shylock, like Gloucester, is *kind as snow in harvest*.

He now feigns to accept Antonio's opinion that the only legitimate interest is the offspring of living creatures. He changes his manner. Hitherto serious, earnest, he now assumes a merry mood. *In a merry sport* he proposes *this merry bond*, the forfeit for the non-payment of which is not money, since friendship does not take

A breed of barren metal of his friend,

but flesh. Antonio is entrapped. Without a moment's delay or a single misgiving he accepts Shylock's offer. He signs the bond. From that moment his fortune declines; one argosy after another is lost; the loan becomes due; the penalty is forfeit.

Thus, *so workmanly*, by this discussion on interest, has Shakespeare prepared, first, Antonio and Bassanio, and, later, the spectators of this drama, for the bond. Upon it the tragic in this play is founded.

Plot in a drama is similar to design in a fabric. The weaver takes various colored threads, and, by artistic skill, weaves them into a beautiful pattern. In order to study this pattern æsthetically, it is necessary to trace each separate thread, to note its connection with each of the others and with all the others, with the pattern as a whole. To apply the simile to the drama, Shakespeare says: *The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together.* It is this life with its *mingled yarn, good and ill together*, its deeds and words, hidden thoughts and emotions, which forms the subject of the drama. Portrayal of these in an artistic manner, by means of design or Plot, is the function of the dramatist. To study a play from the standpoint of construction it is necessary to trace this design; to perceive the connection of the different incidents, speeches, characters, with each other, and with the play as an organic whole. By this method, and only this, can we discern the connection and harmony of parts.

Pursuing this method in the study of this play, we

found that the first Scene of the Growth (I., 3) was in close connection with the first Scene of the Introduction (I., 1). The same is true of the second Scenes in these divisions of the play. When the serving-man announced to Portia the arrival of a forerunner from *the Prince of Morocco, who brings word the prince his master will be here to-night*, she says: *If he have the condition of a saint, and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive me than wive me.* The first words uttered by the Prince of Morocco (II., 1) are so apt, are such a perfect reply to those of Portia, that one could easily imagine the Prince had heard Portia:

Mislike me not for my complexion,  
The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun,  
To whom I am a neighbour and near bred: *seq.*

Thus subtle and vital is the connection between these two Scenes.

By the words of Portia, and later by those of Morocco, on the subject of *complexion*, Shakespeare accomplishes still another dramatic purpose, *viz.*, foreshadowing. Portia's reflection is ominous and forebodes failure for this suitor. Morocco seems to have a presentiment thereof. As the sequel proves, he is correct. He failed to select the casket containing Portia's likeness. When he makes his exit, Portia says:

A gentle riddance. Draw the curtains, go.  
Let all of his complexion choose me so.

Thus these references to *complexion* are not mere

verbal niceties. They are not accidental, but intentional. They are extremely expressive and suggestive. By means of them, Shakespeare dexterously brings into living union different Scenes of the play, and, at the same time, foreshadows the fate of this suitor.

Portia's reply to Morocco, like herself, is gracious and kindly. She informs him of her father's will, and then does for him what Mephistopheles requests the Spirits to do for Faust:

With fairest images of dreams infold him,  
Plunge him in seas of sweet untruth! <sup>1</sup>

Morocco refers to his deeds, his desert as the result of them, and the uncertainty attending the choice of the caskets. Portia informs him he must

. . . swear, before you choose, if you choose wrong  
Never to speak to lady afterward  
In way of marriage.

The first Scene of the Growth had ended with the promise of Antonio to meet Shylock at the notary's, and sign the bond. The second Scene of the Growth concludes with Portia's direction to the Prince:

First, forward to the temple: after dinner  
Your hazard shall be made.

In these two opening Scenes of the Growth there have been both continuity and progress. The former does not of necessity include the latter. The former

<sup>1</sup> *Faust*, The First Part, Scene III.

may be but an eddy, the latter is the main current of a stream. The eddy moves, moves in the form of a circle. It makes no advance. The main current of a stream moves forward, advances, progresses. Likewise, in a drama there may be continuity, which is the giving of details, the exposition of the subject, without any progress. There is dramatic progress only when continuity is accompanied by an increment; when the details are related to and are the expression of development, unfolding of Plot; when the action moves forward to the Catastrophe. In the first two Scenes of the Growth of this play there have been both continuity and progress. In them the action has moved forward toward the Climax and Catastrophe.

One danger which threatens the dramatist in constructing the Growth of a play is too rapid progress of the Main Action. This is averted by the employment of Episodes or Subsidiary Actions. Shakespeare here uses both. The next Scene (II., 2) is an Episode. The action temporarily ceases to progress. Launcelot, in a leisurely way, soliloquizes. Although he is apparently superficial and trifling, what he says is wise and serious. It describes the conflict, as old as man, between good and evil in the human heart. It recalls Plato's myth of the Phædrus, in which man is compared to a charioteer driving two horses, one high-spirited, aspiring, the other earthward, grovelling.

Old Gobbo enters. Between him and Launcelot a long and, on the part of the latter, a bantering conversation takes place. It is in a similar vein to



Launcelot's soliloquy, and is introduced by Shakespeare with the same intent, *viz.*, retardation. Meanwhile the action is stopped.

While this is the primary, it is not the only, object of this Scene. In it Shakespeare, as a relief to the feelings, introduces the comic. In nothing does Shakespeare reveal his genius more than in the fusion of the tragic and the comic in the same play.<sup>1</sup> In this he is among dramatists almost unique. In dramatic literature there are great tragedies in which there is no humor. On the other hand, there are comedies of a high order from which is entirely excluded the serious, the sad, the tragic. Shakespeare perceived that this distinction was neither real nor artistic. The smile on the lip is as natural as the tear in the eye. The laugh, like the sob, is a normal expression of human feeling. The ludicrous is the natural antithesis of the serious. Shakespeare is true to this phase of human nature. On the boards of his theatre fools elbow philosophers; clowns stand side by side with kings and heroes. In his writings, and nowhere more than in this play, the humorous and the serious, the comic and the tragic, are mingled; more, they are fused.

This Scene also, by its contrast to the two previous ones, manifests Variety. The primary quality of a work of Art is Unity. As upper implies lower, larger smaller, so Unity implies Variety. This we find in Nature. In the landscape there are hill and dale, mountain and valley; there are bright and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. my *Introduction to I. Henry IV.*, Bankside edition, vol. xii., p. 2.

dark colors, sunshine and shadow; there are loud and soft, harsh and melodious sounds. The Growth of this drama is true to Nature in that it possesses Variety. In the first Scene (I., 3) is the interview between Bassanio, Shylock, Antonio. It is dark, foreboding, tragic. The second (II., 1) is neither tragic nor comic but serious. The fates of two persons, Portia and the Prince of Morocco, are to be decided. In the next (II., 2) we have the comic. Thus this division of the drama possesses Variety, which is as requisite an essential of a great work of Art as Unity. In fact, the two are, and of necessity must be, coexistent. "The essence of harmony," says Todhunter, "is that it unites dissimilar elements, so that by the very clashing of their natures they enhance each other's perfection. Beauty is, in fact, the reconciliation of contradictions, a Hegelian identity of opposites."<sup>1</sup>

Still another dramatic purpose subserved by this Scene is the introduction of Launcelot as a Link-Person. By means of him the Jew and the Christian sides of the drama, which had first been brought together by the meeting of Bassanio and Shylock, are drawn still closer. Launcelot had been the servant of Shylock. While he and Old Gobbo are engaged in a conversation, in which the former expresses his discontent with Shylock, Bassanio enters. He is giving directions to Leonardo as to his departure for Belmont. Launcelot and Old Gobbo make their request to Bassanio. In each case the language used is the natural outgrowth of the mind of

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, Part I., p. 243.

the speaker. That of Launcelot expresses a lack of coherence, sequence. It manifests the untrained mind. Old Gobbo misuses words. He is both inconsequent and senile. Finally, in answer to Bassanio's question, *What would you?* Launcelot replies, *Serve you, sir.* Bassanio grants the request:

I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit:  
Shylock thy master spoke with me this day,  
And hath preferr'd thee, if it be preferment  
To leave a rich Jew's service, to become  
The follower of so poor a gentleman.

Launcelot leaves the service of Shylock, enters that of Bassanio. This is the only action in this Scene. It is a Link-Action. This is Launcelot's special function in the play. Here, and every time he appears hereafter, he acts as a connecting link between different persons or different actions. He is a Link-Person.

After the exit of Launcelot and Old Gobbo, Bassanio urges Leonardo to complete arrangements for the voyage to Belmont:

I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this:  
These things being bought and orderly bestow'd,  
Return in haste, for I do feast to-night  
My best-esteem'd acquaintance: hie thee, go.

Gratiano enters. He says to Bassanio:

I must go with you to Belmont.

Bassanio demurs. He makes a subtle but keen analysis of Gratiano's character and conduct. At length, on Gratiano's promise to

. . . put on a sober habit,  
Talk with respect and swear but now and then,  
Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely,

and to mend his conduct in various other respects, Bassanio withdraws his objection. Bassanio goes to woo Portia. Gratiano ostensibly goes as his companion. As the sequel proves, really though unintentionally, he also goes wooing. The voyage, like Orlando's wrestling, had a twofold result. The latter *tripped up the wrestler's heels, and Rosalind's heart both in an instant*. Likewise, when Bassanio won Portia for himself, he also, unbeknown to himself, won Nerissa for Gratiano. As Gratiano said:

You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid;  
You lov'd, I lov'd, for intermission  
No more pertains to me, my lord, than you.  
Your fortune stood upon the casket there,  
And so did mine, too, as the matter falls; *seq.*

Thus the fates of these two men were linked together much more closely than either suspected.

The remaining part of the Growth of this play, so much as is contained in Act II., Scenes 3 to 6 inclusive, is devoted almost entirely to portraying the elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo. These two characters are created by Shakespeare. There is no prototype of them in the stories which he used in the composition of this play. They, and the part they play in the drama, throw great light on Shakespeare's constructive methods.

In this division of a drama, as previously stated,

the progress of the Main Action must be slow, gradual. The interest of the spectator must not be too suddenly or too intensely excited. It must be first aroused, afterward heightened. Hence, the dramatist must follow the example of Prospero in dealing with the love affair of Ferdinand and Miranda:

this swift business  
I must uneasy make, lest too light winning  
Make the prize light.

Prospero then proceeds to provoke a quarrel with Ferdinand, the effect of which is twofold; it retards the progress of the wooing, and also that of the action of the drama. In the play under consideration, Shakespeare accomplishes the same purpose, first, by the introduction of the Episode (II., 2) devoted to Launcelot and Old Gobbo, and, later, by a Sub-Action, the elopement of Lorenzo and Jessica. While this Sub-Action is in progress, the Main Action ceases movement. In these Scenes (II., 3 to 6 inclusive) there is no reference to Bassanio and Portia. On the conclusion of the Sub-Action, the Main Action resumes movement (II., 7), and progresses swiftly till the Climax of the play has been reached and passed.

By the elopement of Lorenzo and Jessica, Shakespeare also overcomes a mechanical difficulty, *viz.*, the time, *three months*, intervening between the signing and the forfeit of Antonio's bond. Shakespeare was versatile. To meet and conquer a difficulty of this nature he sometimes introduced a Prologue. In *Henry V.* there are, during the

movement of the Action, frequent intervals of time. In order to bridge them he introduces before each of the five divisions of the play a Prologue, thereby

Jumping o'er times,  
Turning the accomplishment of many years  
Into an hour-glass.

In this play he conquers a similar difficulty, *viz.*, the length of time the bond runs, by this elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo.

Still another dramatic function performed by these two characters is that of a Link-Action. Jessica leaves her father for her husband. She retires from the Jew side of the drama, and links her fate with that of the Christian. In so doing, she becomes a connecting link, binding together more closely the different actors and different actions portrayed in the drama. She and Lorenzo leave Venice. We hear of them and their doings in Genoa. They next appear at Belmont, after Bassanio has won Portia. They form part of the group, composed of three pairs of lovers, standing around the caskets. One function they perform in the drama is that of a Link-Action.

Jessica performs still another dramatic function. She was motherless. She was homeless. She said to Launcelot: *Our house is hell*. She had no companions but Launcelot and Shylock. Her father's treatment of her was most unpaternal. To manifest this was one, if not the principal, object of Act II., Scene 5. Shylock addresses her as if she were an alien and a slave. No wonder, then, she says:



Alack, what heinous sin is it in me  
To be ashamed to be my father's child!  
But though I am a daughter to his blood,  
I am not to his manners.

Such feeling was the natural fruit of the treatment she received from her father. As to character, she was childish. In Genoa she exchanged a valuable ring for a valueless monkey. She was also childlike. This is very different from childishness. The former means guileless, innocent, true, lovable. She was *a most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew*. She evoked Lorenzo's love:

Beshrew me but I love her heartily;  
For she is wise, if I can judge of her;  
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true,  
And true she is, as she hath proved herself,  
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair and true,  
Shall she be placed in my constant soul.

To realize the full force of Lorenzo's words, one must remember that Jessica was a Jewess. More, she was the daughter of such a Jew as Shylock. Her loveliness, therefore, must have been extraordinary to overcome the antipathy which in Venice, at the date of this play, Christians felt toward Jews.

Shakespeare's portrayal of her and her elopement is, therefore, perfectly true to nature. Her conduct is in strict accord with a great biologic law, that of self-preservation. Everything living which is placed in an environment that is unfavorable to its existence strives to reach a more favorable one. A delicate plant in a dark cave struggles toward the ray of

light which shines through a fissure of the rock. The frail flower planted in earth not favorable sends its roots down deeper and deeper seeking moisture and nourishment. Birds leave an unfavorable for a favorable habitat. So this motherless girl instinctively feels her affectional nature would die in that atmosphere which was loveless, in that house which was *hell*, and she as instinctively seeks an environment which will preserve and develop that affectional nature. Under these circumstances, was she unfilial in leaving that house and that father? Is not Shakespeare's portrayal of her true to nature?

I have analyzed this character briefly, not for the purpose of giving a character-sketch, but in order to make evident still another important function Shakespeare intended Jessica to perform, *viz.*, Dramatic Hedging. As the play progresses Shylock more and more manifests his character as brutal and repulsive. No man ever uttered words more unpaternal, more inhuman than Shylock, when he said:

I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!

If Shakespeare had put these words into Shylock's mouth, without, at the same time, surrounding him with extenuating circumstances, he would have made the fatal dramatic error of creating not a man, but a monster. Shylock would thereby have been placed beyond the pale of human sympathy.

The spectators would lose all interest in him. Marlowe makes this mistake in the character of Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*. Such character portraiture is inartistic. It is fatal to a drama. Shakespeare avoids this, not by ameliorating or modifying or altering the character of Shylock. He develops that normally. He accomplished his purpose by Dramatic Hedging. This is effected by introducing this Sub-Action of the elopement. Much as we admire Jessica, and think she was justified in her conduct, yet she was Shylock's daughter. When she leaves his house and himself, we feel some sympathy for that father, forsaken, suffering, who says, referring to this elopement:

No ill luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders;  
no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding.

Shylock was not a fiend, but a man. Thus Shakespeare uses this elopement as the means by which he effects one primary object of the drama, *viz.*, to evoke the sympathy, the pity of the spectators.

At the close of Scene 6 Jessica enters. Lorenzo says:

What, art thou come? On, gentlemen; away!  
Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.

They depart. The elopement is consummated.

Antonio now appears. He meets Gratiano and says:

Fie, fie, Gratiano! where are all the rest?  
'T is nine o'clock: our friends all stay for you.

No masque to-night: the wind is come about;  
 Bassanio presently will go aboard:  
 I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

Gratiano replies:

I am glad on 't: I desire no more delight  
 Than to be under sail and gone to-night.

With the departure of Lorenzo and Jessica the Growth of the play ends. When Bassanio and Gratiano sail for Belmont the Climax begins.

## CLIMAX

### II., 7-III., 2

The Main Action of this play is the love affair of Bassanio and Portia. Bassanio's love for Portia and his wooing of her is the Complicating Force. Flowing from this is the loan made by Shylock and the bond signed by Antonio. While this is very important, it is but a Sub-Action, an under-plot. If Bassanio had not been in love, and had not needed money to push his suit, the loan of three thousand ducats would not have been made. Hence, the Main or Exciting Action is Bassanio's wooing of Portia. Bassanio, therefore, is the Complicating Force. Portia is the Resolving Force. By means of her the complication caused by the bond is solved. The meeting-point of these two forces is the Climax of the drama.

From the beginning of the Climax (II., 7), everything in the play converges to the casket which

Bassanio chooses (III., 2). Here Bassanio and Portia for the first time in the drama meet. This marks the end of the beginning, the beginning of the end. Previous to this, everything has tended to the *desis*, tying of the knot; subsequent thereto, everything conduces to the *lusis*, or untying. Bassanio is the main actor in the former, Portia in the latter. Bassanio's choice of the casket, which won for him Portia, was no sooner made than he received Antonio's letter, announcing his dangerous position. Portia claims her right to know the contents:

With leave, Bassanio; I am half yourself,  
And I must freely have the half of anything  
That this same paper brings you.

Bassanio informs her. Thereupon she immediately inquires:

Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble?

And, later,

What sum owes he the Jew?

With womanly insight, she recognizes the situation. With womanly tact, she suggests means to avert the danger. She delays action for one purpose only:

First go with me to church and call me wife,  
And then away to Venice to your friend.

After that has been done, she inaugurates that course of action which ultimately saves Antonio.

At the same time and place the principal Sub-

Action, that of the loan and bond, reaches its climax. Almost from the moment Antonio signed the bond, his fortunes have been declining. One argosy after another is lost, until, as he writes Bassanio, *my estate is very low*. All the while Shylock remains steadfast and unwavering in his resolve:

If I can catch him once upon the hip,  
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.

That opportunity has now come. Antonio's *bond to the Jew is forfeit*.

Gratiano's fortune stood upon the same casket as did Bassanio's. When the latter won Portia for himself, he also won Nerissa for Gratiano. Thus the love affair of Gratiano and Nerissa, constituting another of the Sub-Actions, reaches its climax at the same time as that of Bassanio and Portia. To this group are now added Lorenzo and Jessica, whose experiences constitute another Sub-Action.

Thus, the Casket Scene (III., 2) is the Climax of the drama. It is the meeting-point of all the Complicating and all the Resolving Forces.

Shakespeare's practice is usually to put the Climax in the exact Mechanical Centre of a play. The *Merchant of Venice* is no exception. It is not so as the play is published in Folio I. When the play is divided into Acts according to the laws of dramatic construction, as I have divided it for the purposes of this study, Act III. and the Climax are coterminous. Accepting the Bankside numeration, the play contains 2732 verses. The centre verse would be 1366. The middle verse of the Climax,



as I have defined it, is 1324. It is evident from this that the centre of Climax is almost the exact Mechanical Centre of the play. It is the central point, the point to which all the factors in the fore part of the play converge, and from which all the factors in the after part of the play diverge.

Analyzing the Climax, we find that it is composed of five Scenes. Of these, three relate to the caskets. The other two (II., 8, and III., 1) are Episodes. I shall consider the last two first.

Of these, II., 8, consists of a conversation between Salarino and Salanio. It begins with a reference to the elopement of Jessica, and its effect on Shylock, which is thus described by Salanio:

I never heard a passion so confused,  
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,  
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets: *seq.*

Salarino then reports a rumor of the loss of a ship. Both Salanio and Salarino think of Antonio. The Scene closes with a description of the parting between Antonio and Bassanio, and of the love of the former for the latter.

While nothing has been done in this Scene, there has been dramatic progress. Shylock's *lodg'd hate* is intensifying. A new revelation has been given of Antonio's love for Bassanio. In both these effects the poet manifests fine foreshadowing.

The other episodic Scene of the Climax (III., 1) is a direct continuation of the one just analyzed. The rumor of the loss of a ship, of which Salarino informed us (II., 8), is now confirmed. Nay, more.

it is made more definite. This ship is Antonio's. His fortunes are sinking. At the same time, Shylock's hate is intensifying.

Shakespeare now gives another masterly example of Dramatic Hedging. The character of Shylock is becoming repulsive. In order to prevent the sympathy of the spectator from being alienated, Shakespeare makes him, in a brief speech, express the thought that human nature, in its essential traits, is the same in all men :

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes ? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions ? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is ? If you prick us, do we not bleed ? If you tickle us, do we not laugh ? If you poison us, do we not die ?

The object of the dramatist is accomplished perfectly. Even to this day these words touch in every mind and heart a chord which is responsive, sympathetic. And they always will. After expressing these sentiments, Shylock reveals his character and his purpose in the inference he draws :

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility ? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example ? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

Logically, ethically, Shylock is incorrect. Dramatically, the speech is perfect. It is a master-stroke.

A play is written to be acted. One could not accurately and intelligently judge a musical composition from reading the notes. No more can one form an accurate and intelligent opinion of a drama from simply reading the words. It is necessary to hear the musical composition played, to see the drama acted. The notes of the former must be transformed into sounds, the words of the latter into actions. In forming a critical opinion of a play, therefore, one canon is, Is it successful as an acted play? The expression of Shakespeare's genius did not take the form of epic or lyric poetry, but of dramatic. A drama is not only a literary, but also a histrionic production. In order, therefore, to study a drama intelligently, its acting qualities, its adaptability to stage representation, must always be considered. Judged by this test, this play is well-nigh perfect. One of the finest points in it is this speech of Shylock, a speech which always has, and always will, touch a responsive chord in every human breast, because it appeals to those qualities of our common nature which are essential, universal, perennial, which Jew and Christian have in common.

Tubal enters. Immediately Salanio and Salarino retire. Shylock and Tubal are left alone. The latter reports that his efforts to find Jessica, with the money and the jewels, have been unsuccessful. Shylock is wrought up to a frenzy. He is completely overcome with a passion which is almost fiendish. Shakespeare's description is a perfect portrayal of complex emotions. The Scene is suf

fused with subtle and intense feeling. While in some respects repulsive, in others it is fascinating. A profound emotion is elemental. It is, in this respect, like water, fire, wind. And this is so, even though the passion be perverted. A rushing torrent, a consuming fire, a whirlwind, even though destructive, are awe-inspiring. Likewise, a profound, overmastering human feeling, even though it be perverted, is sublime. In this study I am considering the play from the standpoint of Plot. I cannot, therefore, do more than refer indirectly to either Character or Passion. The Scene ends with Shylock's request to Tubal: *Go, Tubal, fee me an officer.*

Both of these Scenes (II., 8, and III., 1) are, as I have stated, episodic. The action of the drama temporarily stops. They are epic, narrative. In them we are informed of what has transpired, but nothing is done. Both, also, relate to one of the Sub-Actions. In each of these respects they differ from the other three Scenes of the Climax, which I have denominated the Casket Scenes, *viz.*, II., 7, II., 9, III., 2. In them there is movement, the action of the drama rapidly progresses to the Climax. Also, they constitute the Main Action.

Shakespeare's Plot, so far as it makes the success of Portia's wooer depend on the selection of the casket containing her picture, has been criticised as being unreasonable, unnatural, and, therefore, in-artistic. Are there any grounds for this criticism? Shakespeare has based this part of his drama on "The Story of the Choice of Three Caskets." A

comparison of the story and the drama reveals several differences. In the story a woman chooses one of three caskets to win thereby a husband. Shakespeare changes this. He makes the man the chooser. Further there was but one woman who chose; in the play there are three men who do so. Still more, Shakespeare adds numberless suitors to these three. Bassanio informs us:

For the four winds blow in from every coast  
Renowned suitors.

The Prince of Morocco confirms this:

. . . all the world desires her;  
From the four corners of the earth they come,  
To kiss this shrine, this mortal breathing saint.

In thus glorifying Portia, Shakespeare gives expression to his originative, constructive genius. He thereby makes the prize to be won bear some proportion to the risk which the suitors incur. For that risk was great. Before selecting a casket each chooser was compelled to take an oath never to marry, if unsuccessful. Further, there was no hint given upon which to make a choice, except the inscriptions on the caskets. Upon such data it was impossible with any certainty to base a decision. The choosers seem to have been fully cognizant of the risk they incurred. So deeply impressed with it were the Neapolitan prince, the County Palatine, the French lord, Falconbridge, the Scottish lord, the Duke of Saxony's nephew, that they all with

one consent refused to venture a choice. Morocco ventured, but praying,

Some god direct my judgement !

The Prince of Arragon called

Fortune now  
To my heart's hope!

The inner meaning of the Casket Scenes will be revealed by two considerations:

I. It is a mistake to base judgment on appearances only. They who do so are

. . . the fool multitude, that choose by show,  
Not learning more than the fond eye doth teach;  
Which pries not to the interior:

and, as a consequence, are led into error and disaster. This was the cause of Morocco's failure.

One of these three contains her heavenly picture.  
Is 't like that lead contains her ? *seq.*

He failed. As the result of his effort he learned,

All that glisters is not gold;  
Often have you heard that told:  
Many a man his life hath sold  
But my outside to behold:  
Gilded tombs do worms infold.

Arragon rejected the leaden casket:

You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard.



He selected the silver one. He found not Portia's likeness, but the *portrait of a blinking idiot*, and received the message:

Some there be that shadows kiss;  
Such have but a shadow's bliss:  
There be fools alive, I wis,  
Silver'd o'er; and so was this.

The song which is sung while Bassanio is deciding conveys the same truth:

Tell me where is fancy (love) bred,  
Or in the heart or in the head?

The reply is:

It is engender'd in the eyes,  
With gazing fed: *seq.*

If it does not penetrate deeper than the eyes, *viz.*, to the head, to the heart; if it does not stir to their profoundest depths the emotions, the thoughts, and fill them with itself, it is only a passing sentiment. It lives only in the eyes, lasts only while the object is in sight, is *with gazing fed*. The result is:

. . . and fancy dies  
In the cradle where it lies.

Bassanio was cognizant of this truth. Although he did not comment aloud, giving us the reasons why he chose, we know from the scroll in the leaden casket what were the considerations that influenced him:

You that choose not by the view,  
Chance as fair and choose as true!

This is the truth that he expresses in his soliloquy:

So may the outward shows be least themselves:  
The world is still deceived with ornament.

As a consequence, he chooses the leaden casket:

Therefore, thou gaudy gold,  
Hard food for Midas, I will none of thee;  
Nor none of thee, thou pale and common drudge  
'Tween man and man: but thou, thou meagre lead,  
Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught,  
Thy paleness moves me more than eloquence;  
And here choose I.

II. The final factor which decides one's choice in important matters is not chance, but character. I say the final factor, for there is an element of chance in every human life.

Fortune brings in some boats that are not steer'd.

Character is not alone reason, or emotion, but, rather, is the resultant of all the forces, both internal and external, which have been operating on a person since he became a conscious agent. It is this, the character, the personality, the totality of one's nature, which biases and directs men in the important decisions in life. It was this which guided Morocco, Arragon, Bassanio, in choosing a casket. Morocco was grasping, ambitious. He, therefore, selected the golden casket. Arragon had

an overweening sense of his own worth. He assumed desert. He selected the silver casket. Bassanio does not inform us as to the reasons which guided him. He *comments on the caskets to himself*. Shakespeare, however, does not leave us without a clue. Portia informs us:

Away, then! I am lock'd in one of them:  
If you do love me, you will find me out.

Further, she calls for music while Bassanio is making the choice:

Let music sound while he doth make his choice.

Shakespeare knew that "Music is love in search of a word," and, therefore, while this lover stands before the caskets a song is sung, the subject of which is love. Portia was correct in making love the guide for the lover:

Sweet friends,  
Man's love ascends,  
To higher and diviner ends,  
Than man's thought  
E'er comprehends.<sup>1</sup>

Bassanio, the lover, successfully selects the casket containing *Fair Portia's counterfeit*.

But suppose, says the critic, that Morocco or Arragon had chosen successfully, or Bassanio had failed.<sup>2</sup> Such a supposition is not within the range

<sup>1</sup> Sidney Lanier.

<sup>2</sup> "If all the drops in it were dried up, what would become of the sea?"—*Vanity Fair*, vol. i., p. 307.

of dramatic possibility. From the very beginning of the drama, Shakespeare has indicated Bassanio as the successful chooser, and the future husband. Bassanio himself felt sure of winning Portia. Nerissa points to him as the future husband. Portia endorses this opinion. After Morocco and Arragon have failed and retired, once more does the dramatist point to Bassanio as the lover and coming husband. Immediately on the departure of Arragon a servant enters and says to Portia:

Madam, there is alighted at your gate  
A young Venetian, one that comes before  
To signify the approaching of his lord;  
From whom he bringeth sensible regrets,  
To wit, besides commends and courteous breath,  
Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen  
So likely an ambassador of love:  
A day in April never came so sweet,  
To show how costly summer was at hand,  
As this fore-spurrer comes before his lord.

Portia replies:

Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see  
Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly.

Nerissa answers:

Bassanio, lord Love, if thy will it be!

Once more, when Bassanio is about to venture a choice, Portia entreats him to

. . . pause a day or two  
Before you hazard;

and then, with exquisite banter, she reveals her feelings:

There 's something tells me, but it is not love,  
I would not lose you; and you know yourself,  
Hate counsels not in such a quality.  
But lest you should not understand me well,—  
And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought,—  
I would detain you here some month or two  
Before you venture for me.

Although Portia thus plainly expresses to Bassanio her affection for him, he could not misunderstand or misjudge her.

Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

Thus, by these premonitory suggestions, scattered all through the play, Shakespeare precludes all doubt as to Portia's lover.

These unfavorable criticisms on the Casket Scenes are like those of Hippolyta on the acting of the Athenian mechanicals:

This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

The former criticism, like the latter, is caused by a lack of capacity and appreciation in the critic. And the reply to both is that of Theseus to Hippolyta:

The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Seek not to detect deficiencies and imperfections in works of art until you have previously learnt to recognize and discover beauties. This admonition is the fruit of experience, of noticing daily that the beautiful has remained unknown to most observers

When Bassanio opens the leaden casket he finds therein *Fair Portia's counterfeit*. He then proceeds to describe it. This description is a perfect specimen of the poet's art:

What demi-god  
Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?  
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,  
Seem they in motion? Here are sever'd lips,  
Parted with sugar breath: so sweet a bar  
Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs  
The painter plays the spider and hath woven  
A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men  
Faster than gnats in cobwebs: but her eyes,—  
How could he see to do them? Having made one,  
Methinks it should have power to steal both his  
And leave itself unfurnish'd. Yet look, how far  
The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow  
In underprizing it, so far this shadow  
Doth limp behind the substance.

Shakespeare here refers to Portia's eyes, lips, hair. And yet not, in the case of any of these features, does he describe it as it appears to the eye of the beholder. He does not inform us as to the color or shape of the eyes or lips. He does not tell us whether the hair is light or dark, whether straight or wavy. He does not give a detailed description of the features from the standpoint of material beauty. What he does do is to describe the features by the effect they produce. The eyes are so

. . . because they wish to act the critic before they have begun to be scholars."—Winckelmann, *History of Ancient Art*, translated by Lodge, p. 243.



beautiful, so lifelike, that they apparently move. The lips, paired with perfect symmetry, are like *sweet friends*. They are severed as expressing eager interest, being *parted with sugar breath*. Her hair is so beautiful that it is *a golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men*. Again recurring to the eyes, the windows out of which the mind and soul look, the poet speaks of their bewitching, captivating power. Not in the case of any of these features does he describe it from the standpoint of material beauty, but in every instance the beauty of the feature is portrayed by its effect. The seductive, the entrancing power on the mind and emotion of the beholder is set forth. From the effect we are left to infer as to the cause. In so doing, Shakespeare is true to the canons of poetic art. When Homer would describe Helen's beauty, he informs us only of its effect on the Elders of Troy:

Helen they saw, as to the tow'r she came;  
And 't is no marvel, one to other said,  
The valiant Trojans and the well-greaved Greeks,  
For beauty such as this should long endure  
The toils of war; for goddess-like she seems,  
And yet, despite her beauty, let her go,  
Nor bring on us and on our sons a curse.<sup>1</sup>

Here is not a word about Helen's personal appearance, and yet a perfect description of her great beauty. Similarly Shakespeare informs us of Helen's beauty:

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, Derby's translation, Book III., verse 185, *seq.*

Why, she is a pearl,  
Whose price hath launch'd above a thousand ships,  
And turn'd crown'd kings to merchants.

Of the same nature is Shakespeare's description of Cleopatra:

For her own person,  
It beggar'd all description: she did lie  
In her pavilion—cloth-of-gold of tissue—  
O'er picturing that Venus where we see  
The fancy outwork nature: on each side her  
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,  
With divers-colour'd fans, whose wind did seem  
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,  
And what they undid did. . . .

. . . The city cast  
Her people out upon her; and Antony,  
Enthroned i' the market-place, did sit alone,  
Whistling to the air; which, but for vacancy,  
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too  
And made a gap in Nature.

Paint for us, ye poets [says Lessing], the delight, the affection, the love, the rapture, which beauty produces, and you have painted beauty itself. Who can image to himself as ugly the beloved object at whose sight Sappho confesses she is deprived of all sense and thought? Who does not believe that he sees the most perfectly beautiful form as soon as he sympathizes with those feelings which only such a form can awaken? <sup>1</sup>

And such feelings are evoked by Homer's description of Helen, and likewise by Shakespeare's of her, of Cleopatra, and of Portia.

<sup>1</sup> *Laokoön*, chap. xxi.

This method of describing physical beauty marks one of the limitations of the poetic art. In this it differs from the plastic arts. The philosophy of it is thus stated by Lessing:

Material beauty arises from the harmonious effect of numerous parts, all of which the sight is capable of comprehending at the same time. It requires, therefore, that these parts should lie in juxtaposition; and since things whose parts lie in juxtaposition are the peculiar objects of the plastic arts, these it is, and these only, which can imitate material beauty.<sup>1</sup>

The poet cannot describe all the details at the same moment. One detail after another is portrayed. Therefore, by the limitation of his art, he cannot describe beauty from the material standpoint, the beauty of feature, of form, but only by its effects, its subtle influence on the mind and the emotion of the beholder. When Priam and the Elders of Troy saw Helen they saw in her beauty the cause of the Trojan war. Shakespeare says that her beauty made merchants of crowned kings. Cleopatra's beauty was such that all the city went out to gaze upon it. Portia's beauty of eye and lip, as well as of hair, was but

A golden mesh to entrap the hearts of men  
Faster than gnats in cobwebs.

The Climax ends with preparations for the relief of Antonio. Portia offers to give any amount of money necessary to pay the loan, and relieve him

<sup>1</sup> *Laokoön*, chap. xx.

from the clutches of his remorseless creditor. She then says to Bassanio:

O love, dispatch all business, and be gone!

Bassanio promptly and loyally obeys:

Since I have your good leave to go away,  
I will make haste: but, till I come again,  
No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,  
No rest be interposer 'twixt us twain.

FALL

III., 3-5

The Climax ended with Antonio's letter to Bassanio, announcing his ruined condition. Its contents had been confirmed by Salerio, who stated that all Antonio's ventures had failed. Anticipating this result, Shylock had directed Tubal: *Go, Tubal, fee me an officer; bespeak him a fortnight before.* This had been done. At last Shylock's opportunity to wreak vengeance has come. He has caught Antonio on the hip. Antonio now appears in the custody of a gaoler. With him are also Shylock and Salarino. A brief conversation is held by Antonio and Shylock, almost every word of which foreshadows the Trial Scene. Antonio appeals for mercy.

Hear me yet, good Shylock;

. . . . .

I pray thee, hear me speak.

Shylock refuses to listen :

I'll have my bond ; I will not hear thee speak : *seq.*

So did he likewise at the trial. In response to the Duke's appeal he said :

I have possess'd your grace of what I purpose  
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn  
To have the due and forfeit of my bond:

When Bassanio offers,

For thy three thousand ducats here is six,

Shylock answers :

If every ducat in six thousand ducats  
Were in six parts and every part a ducat,  
I would not draw them; I would have my bond.

When Portia pleaded for mercy he responded :

My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,  
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

And, finally :

By my soul I swear  
There is no power in the tongue of man  
To alter me: I stay here on my bond.

Shylock did not grant Antonio's prayer for mercy. Nor did he grant that of the Duke, or that of Portia.

The reason for Shylock's cruelty is announced by himself :

This is the fool that lent out money gratis.

Antonio was fully cognizant of this:

His reason well I know:  
I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures  
Many that have at times made moan to me;  
Therefore he hates me.

Shylock, unrelenting, and uttering the words, *I will have my bond*, makes his exit. Antonio recognizes the uselessness of further appeal and says:

Let him alone:  
I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.

Salarino then expresses the belief that

The Duke  
Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.

Antonio replies:

The Duke cannot deny the course of law:  
For the commodity that strangers have  
With us in Venice, if it be denied,  
Will much impeach the justice of his state;  
Since that the trade and profit of the city  
Consisteth of all nations.

Here, again, the Trial Scene is foreshadowed. Responding to the Duke's appeal, Shylock demanded

the due and forfeit of my bond:  
If you deny it, let the danger light  
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.



Later,

If you deny me, fie upon your law!  
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.

The full force of this argument is perceived when we remember that the prosperity, the very life, of Venice was based on commerce; and that that, like civilization, depends on a faithful observance of contracts.<sup>1</sup>

The first Scene of the Fall closes with Antonio's description of himself:

These griefs and losses have so bated me,  
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh  
To-morrow to my bloody creditor:

and also with the expression of his wish to see Bassanio:

Pray God, Bassanio come  
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not!

At the close of the Climax (III., 2), Portia had sent Bassanio to the relief of Antonio. Bassanio had no sooner started on that mission than Portia made arrangements to do likewise. The second Scene of the Fall (III., 4) is devoted to the description of what she did. The Scene opens with Lorenzo's tribute to her, her absent lord, and his friend Antonio. Portia replies thereto, and then, an-

<sup>1</sup> "The ancient Celtic law book, the *Senchus Mor*, announced that there are 'three periods at which the world is worthless: The time of a plague, of a general war, and of the dissolution of express contracts!'—Furness, Variorum edition of *Merchant of Venice*, appendix, p. 414.

nouncing her determination to go into a convent accompanied by Nerissa, she commits into Lorenzo's hands

The husbandry and manage of my house,  
Until my lord's return.

She dispatches Balthasar with a letter to her cousin, Doctor Bellario. She finally announces to Nerissa her intention to disguise both her and herself in the habit of men, and thus accoutred to do some work,

That you yet know not of.

Sometimes in dramatic as in real life circumstances arise which make it necessary for a woman to do work which belongs preëminently to a man. In every such case in the Shakespearian dramas, Shakespeare disguises the woman in a male habit. And yet not one of the women whom he so disguises, Julia, Rosalind, Viola, Imogen, Jessica, Nerissa, Portia, ever forgets her sex or becomes coarse. While the dress is that of a man, the nature, the delicacy, is that of a woman. Every one of these women possessed an affectional nature developed to the highest degree. Each one, while accoutred like a young man, was in love with a man. Rosalind, the victim of oppression, banished by her cruel uncle, gladly leaves the court and flees to the forest of Arden. When Celia decides to accompany her, Rosalind proposes, since

Beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold,  
to assume a male guise. She plays her part *in a*

*holiday humour*, and with high spirits; yet she never forgets her innocence or her womanhood. Imogen is compelled to leave her father's court, and flee into the Welsh mountains. Pisanio advises her to don

. . . doublet, hat, hose, all  
That answer to them.

Imogen immediately and bravely acts on this advice. So Julia, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and Viola, in *Twelfth Night*, although in male guise, are always innocent, lovely, feminine. In every instance, as Imogen said,

. . . such means  
Though peril to my modesty, not death on't.

In this play Jessica for the purpose of flight dresses in boy's clothes. She does not become boyish, coarse, immodest, but is always the innocent maiden. When she appeared prepared to elope, she said to Lorenzo:

I am glad 't is night, you do not look on me,  
For I am much ashamed of my exchange: *seq.*

Nerissa assumes a male guise to aid Portia. Portia does so in order to save her husband's friend. She is the Resolving Force in this drama. One of her principal functions as such is to save Antonio. For that purpose she assumes a male attire, and does so seriously, and also with glee:

I 'll hold thee any wager,  
When we are both accoutred like young men,  
I 'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,

And wear my dagger with the braver grace,  
And speak between the change of man and boy  
With a reed voice, and turn two mincing steps  
Into a manly stride, and speak of frays  
Like a fine bragging youth, and tell quaint lies,  
How honourable ladies sought my love,  
Which I denying, they fell sick and died.

And as long as she is disguised, while she is mirthful she is earnest; while noble and gracious she possesses an exhilarating sense of fun; above all, she is a true woman.

In nothing does Shakespeare manifest the perfection of his art more than in his portraiture of woman. He never created a masculine woman. Such are unnatural, abnormal. This is tacitly acknowledged in the old legend of the Amazons. They are generally located in the vicinity

. . . of the Cannibals that each other eat,  
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders,

the philosophy of which, according to Bacon, is, where women unsex themselves and become and act like men, men will be monsters. Shakespeare's women are not Amazonian, but feminine.

Among all the women Shakespeare created there are but one or two who are not *as chaste as ice, as pure as snow*. When Cressida was unfaithful to Troilus, the latter says, and there can be no nobler tribute to womanhood:

Let it not be believed for womanhood!  
Think, we had mothers; do not give advantage

To stubborn critics, apt, without a theme  
 For depravation, to square the general sex  
 By Cressid's rule: rather think this not Cressid.

To return, Scene 4 is wholly transitional. In it Shakespeare prepares the spectator for the Trial Scene. Before that begins, however, we have Scene 5, which is the last of the Fall. This is a comic interlude. In it there is no movement. It is a conversation, first between Jessica and Launcelot; later, Lorenzo joins them, and takes part. The conversation is pervaded with a spirit of playfulness and banter.

Shakespeare frequently introduces a comic scene near the conclusion of a tragedy. His purpose is twofold: to relieve temporarily the strained feelings of the spectators, and to make, by this use of Contrast, the Catastrophe more tragic. In *Hamlet*, just before the duel between Hamlet and Laertes, Osric is introduced. Between him and Hamlet there is held a bantering conversation. This is no sooner ended than the duel takes place, the result of which is death to Laertes, the King, the Queen, and Hamlet. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the Clown who brings

. . . the pretty worm of Nilus  
 That kills and pains not

tells her that *his biting is immortal; those that do die of it do seldom or never recover*. With this jesting in the very presence of death, Cleopatra's fate becomes more appalling. In the *Merchant of Venice* the Scene which ushers in the Catastrophe is a comic interlude. It makes more tragic the Trial

Scene which immediately follows. For this purpose it was introduced by Shakespeare.

## CATASTROPHE

## IV., V.

The Trial Scene (IV., 1) is a caricature of legal justice. At the same time, it is a masterpiece of dramatic construction. How are these two statements reconciled? Shakespeare was writing not a legal treatise, but a drama. In studying this Trial Scene this fact must continually be borne in mind. Forgetfulness of it leads to numberless misconceptions and errors; in fact, completely blinds one to appreciation of this play as a work of dramatic art. Most criticisms of Shakespeare's construction of this play betray forgetfulness of the truth that this is a drama, and that many things which are not allowable in a history or a story are legitimate in a drama, because of what is, technically, dramatic necessity. "Anything in art is right which enhances an effect legitimate to the product in which it is used."<sup>1</sup> The essential point, the final test by which we must judge this Trial Scene, as every Scene in a drama, for it is a universal test, is dramatic appropriateness. The beginning of all true æsthetic criticism is the recognition of the truth that Art in any form "addresses not pure sense, still less the pure intellect, but the imaginative reason through the senses."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Raymond, *Genesis of Art-Form*, p. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Pater, *Renaissance*, p. 135.



It is not at all necessary that in a drama justice to be perfect should be strictly legal. All that is necessary is that it should be in accord with what is technically Poetic Justice. What is that? It is justice made artistic. This does not mean that Poetic Justice violates the eternal laws of right and wrong, that it is not in harmony with the experiences of human life. It must be both. The justice meted to Shylock is both. It is in accordance with the eternal laws of right and wrong, and also with the experiences of human life.

Shylock's motive was complex. It was, first, revenge; second, rapacity. He reveals this in his conversation with Tubal. When informed by Tubal, Antonio *cannot choose but break*, Shylock said

I 'll plague him; I 'll torture him. . . . I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will.

In estimating the full force of these words, it must be remembered that they were spoken by Shylock to his coreligionist, and in the confidence and candor of friendship.

It is eternally true that

Revenge, at first though sweet, bitter ere long,  
Back on itself recoils.

Shylock is blind to this. He rejects all appeals for mercy. He demands judgment according to the law. Pushing that demand to an extreme point, he violates a law of Venice, and thereby puts himself in a position which is fatal:

Tarry, Jew:

The law hath yet another hold on you.  
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,  
If it be proved against an alien  
That by direct or indirect attempts  
He seek the life of any citizen,  
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive  
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half  
Comes to the privy coffer of the state;  
And the offender's life lies in the mercy  
Of the duke only, 'gainst all other voice.  
In which predicament, I say, thou stand'st.

Shylock's desire for revenge, so intense, so bitter, so deadly, neutralizes itself and recoils upon his own head.

Poetic Justice must also be in accord with the experiences of human life. Shylock is not the only one in this play who suffers. Antonio experiences the keenest anguish. Why? Because he signed a bond, by means of which he risked his fortune and his life for the sole purpose of aiding his friend. Is his distress in accord with the experiences of human life? In this world suffering is the experience not alone of wrong-doers. The innocent also suffer. When the Messenger brought word to Cleopatra that Antony was married to Octavia, Cleopatra drew a knife and attempted to kill the Messenger for bringing such unwelcome news. Charmian remonstrated:

Good madam, keep yourself within yourself:  
The man is innocent.

To this Cleopatra responded :

Some innocents 'scape not the thunderbolt.

In real life the wayward son brings sorrow and disgrace upon the saintly parents. The innocent wife and children suffer for the misconduct of the husband and father. In the drama the honest, open, affectionate, but deceived and misguided Othello suffers the torments of the lost; the faithful Cordelia dies with her father. In this play Antonio is brought, by his friendship for Bassanio, to the very verge of destruction. Such is Poetic Justice. While it is not strictly legal justice, it is justice in perfect accord with the eternal laws of right and wrong; with the experiences of humanity. It is justice modified by considerations of Art. It is artistic justice.

The Trial Scene opens with a conversation between the Duke and Antonio. Shylock's *lodg'd hate* against Antonio has developed to the highest degree, and has made him, as the Duke says:

A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch  
Uncapable of pity, void and empty  
From any dram of mercy.

Antonio's misfortunes had been numerous and ruinous. His appeals for mercy had been spurned by Shylock. He resigns himself to his fate:

I have heard  
Your grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify  
His rigorous course; but since he stands obdurate

And that no lawful means can carry me  
Out of his envy's reach, I do oppose  
My patience to his fury, and am arm'd  
To suffer, with a quietness of spirit,  
The very tyranny and rage of his.

Shylock enters. At last these two men, who are the principal actors in the Sub-Action, whose experiences constitute the tragedy of the play, stand face to face in the ducal court. A study of this Trial Scene in detail will reveal the fact that it is a masterpiece of dramatic construction.

The Duke, addressing Shylock, expresses the opinion which is current, which is natural, that Shylock will eventually show mercy. The latter, in a most emphatic and determined manner, gives the Duke to understand that that opinion is incorrect:

I have possess'd your grace of what I purpose  
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn  
To have the due and forfeit of my bond.

Shylock declines to give any reason for his *strange apparent cruelty*, for his choice of *a weight of carrion flesh* rather than three thousand ducats, except, *it is my humour*. Then follows an angry discussion between Bassanio and Shylock. Antonio perceives the uselessness of further appeal to Shylock's mercy and says:

Therefore, I do beseech you,  
Make no more offers, use no farther means,  
But with all brief and plain conveniency  
Let me have judgement, and the Jew his will.

Bassanio, recognizing the fact that Shylock is unmerciful, appeals to his cupidity:

For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

Shylock refuses the offer. The Duke says:

How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none ?

Shylock replies:

I stand for judgement: answer; shall I have it ?

The Duke is on the point of dismissing the court, when a messenger (Nerissa) arrives with letters from Bellario. Shylock thinks his triumph sure and complete. He sharpens his knife,

To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

A fierce dispute now takes place between Bassanio and Gratiano on the one side, and the pitiless and murderous Shylock on the other. Portia enters. She is informed thoroughly of the cause. She asserts that Shylock's claim is legal:

Of a strange nature is the suit you follow;  
Yet in such rule that the Venetian law  
Cannot impugn you as you do proceed.

She asks Antonio if he confesses the bond. He replies in the affirmative. Then Portia, following the example of Antonio, the Duke, and Bassanio, appeals to Shylock's mercy:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd, *seq.*

Shylock rejects this entreaty as he had the others. Thus once more does he refuse to grant mercy. By making him act in this inhuman manner, Shakespeare accomplishes two objects: 1. He makes more apparent the cruelty of Shylock's nature and conduct. 2. He intensifies to the highest degree the emotional strain of Antonio and his friends.

Portia asks:

Is he not able to discharge the money?

Bassanio offers it, *Yea, twice the sum*; in fact, *ten times o'er*; and then prays Portia:

Wrest once the law to your authority:  
To do a great right, do a little wrong,  
And curb this cruel devil of his will.

Portia declines, *it must not be*. Shylock's triumph seems assured:

A Daniel come to judgement! yea, a Daniel!

Still Portia delays. Although she knows the exact point on which she proposes to decide against Shylock and to save Antonio, she prolongs to the utmost extent the crisis. In this Shakespeare manifests perfect technique. Portia asks to see the bond. While examining it, she says incidentally:

Shylock, there 's thrice thy money offer'd thee.

Shylock responds:

An oath, an oath, I have an oath in heaven.



Was that the oath referred to by Jessica?

When I was with him I have heard him swear  
To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,  
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh  
Than twenty times the value of the sum  
That he did owe him.

Portia then begins to give judgment:

Why, this bond is forfeit;  
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim  
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off  
Nearest the merchant's heart.

Once more she appeals to Shylock's mercy, and then to his cupidity:

Be merciful:  
Take thrice thy money; bid me tear the bond.

But in vain. Shylock replies:

By my soul I swear,  
There is no power in the tongue of man  
To alter me: I stay here on my bond.

The emotional strain has now become so intense that Antonio can endure it no longer. He joins with Shylock in asking judgment:

Most heartily I do beseech the Court  
To give the judgement.

Portia complies with the request and proceeds slowly, giving judgment in favor of Shylock on

every point. Shylock gloats over his helpless victim. Portia now turns to Antonio:

You, merchant, have you anything to say?

Shakespeare, as a great artist, knew well the powerful effect of Contrast. He had *opposed* Antonio's *patience* to Shylock's *fury*; Antonio's *quietness of spirit* to the *very tyranny and rage* of Shylock's. Over against Shylock's triumph, he now portrays Antonio's despair. He contrasts Shylock's fiendish malignity with Antonio's love for Bassanio. In a speech full of deep and passionate emotion Antonio says:

Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!  
Grieve not that I am fallen to this for you; *seq.*

Shakespeare now again makes use of Contrast. In order to intensify the tragic, he introduces the comic. Antonio concludes what he and all believe to be his dying speech by a very humorous play on words:

For if the Jew do cut but deep enough,  
I'll pay it presently with all my heart.

Then Bassanio, in a passionate outburst of despairing friendship, says to Antonio, in the presence of Portia, he would sacrifice everything, even his wife, to deliver him. Gratiano, in the presence of Nerissa, wishes his wife

were in heaven, so she could  
Entreat some power to change this curish Jew.

the humor of all which is apparent when we remember that the spectators of this drama know, what none in that court but Portia and Nerissa knew, that they were the wives of Bassanio and Gratiano.

Shylock now again asks for judgment:

We trifle time: I pray thee, pursue sentence.

Portia proceeds:

A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine:  
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.  
And you must cut this flesh from off his breast:  
The law allows it, and the court awards it.

Then, as Shylock says to Antonio, *Come, prepare!* and is about to proceed to cut the flesh, Portia says, *Tarry a little*. This is the climax of the Trial Scene. This Scene, like the play of which it forms a part, is written in the form of an arch. In both, Shakespeare's work is perfectly symmetrical; that is, the factors on one side of the climax balance perfectly those on the other side. The crest of the arch is the words *Tarry a little*. Previous to this Shylock is triumphant, every decision has been in his favor; subsequent to this every decision is against him. Previous to this his fiendish glee is growing greater and greater, his knife has been sharpened to the keenness of a razor; following this his glee changes first into seriousness, then into rage, later into despair.

Portia says:

Tarry a little; there is something else.  
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;

The words expressly are, "a pound of flesh":  
Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;  
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed  
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods  
Are, by the laws of Venice, confiscate  
Unto the state of Venice.

Of course this is a quibble. The justice which Portia dispenses is not legal but Poetic Justice. The man who had pushed his suit to the extreme degree because it was his *humour*, now receives an adverse decision based on a petty sophism. The man who craved the law and stood on the literal reading of the bond, now receives a justice which, while inequitable, was based on the letter of the law. The man who had rejected thrice the amount of the bond can now collect nothing but the penalty. The man who had said triumphantly, *A Daniel come to judgement*, now has that phrase tauntingly repeated to him by Gratiano:

A Daniel, still say I, a second Daniel!  
I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.

The man who had forced Antonio into a position in which, in the bitterness of his distress, he said:

For herein Fortune shows herself more kind  
Than is her custom: it is still her use  
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,  
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow  
An age of poverty; from which lingering penance  
Of such misery doth she cut me off,

now by the reaction of his cruelty on himself is ruined:

Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:  
 You take my house when you do take the prop  
 That doth sustain my house; you take my life  
 When you do take the means whereby I live.

Thus *the whirligig of time brings in his revenges*, and thus Shakespeare has made this Trial Scene symmetrical by making the factors on one side of the climax balance those on the other.

The object of tragedy, said Aristotle, is to evoke pity and fear. By a masterpiece of Dramatic Hedging Shakespeare evokes pity for Shylock. The latter not only loses his suit, and with that his wealth, but also is insulted and outraged, grossly and cruelly. Antonio foregoes his share of the fine on condition

. . . he will let me have  
 The other half in use, to render it,  
 Upon his death, unto the gentleman  
 That lately stole his daughter:  
 Two things provided more, that, for this favour,  
 He presently become a Christian;  
 The other, that he do record a gift,  
 Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,  
 Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.

Shylock, in a frenzy of grief, says:

I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;  
 I am not well : send the deed after me,  
 And I will sign it.

He leaves the court ruined, broken-hearted.

With the close of the trial the tragic in this play ends. The Sub-Action—for the loan of three thousand ducats and all the experiences of Antonio and Shylock resulting therefrom constitute a Sub-Action—gives way to the Main Action, the love affair of Bassanio and Portia. All impediments to the full fruition of that love have now been removed. The Main Action of the drama, therefore, from this time moves forward rapidly and happily to the conclusion.

After Bassanio had made the successful choice of the casket, and thereby won Portia, Portia gave herself unreservedly to him:

But now I was the lord  
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,  
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,  
This house, these servants and this same myself  
Are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring;  
Which when you part from, lose, or give away,  
Let it presage the ruin of your love  
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.

In reply Bassanio said:

But when this ring  
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence:  
O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

Shakespeare thus foreshadowed the Episode of the Rings, which plays so important a part in the Catastrophe. When Antonio was saved Bassanio urged the judge (Portia) to take a fee. She refused. He then said:



Dear sir, of force I must attempt you further:  
Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute,  
Not as a fee.

She yielded:

And, for your love, I 'll take this ring from you.

Likewise the judge's clerk (Nerissa) obtained from Gratiano his ring, which she had given to him.

Shakespeare has introduced this Episode of the Rings for two purposes:

1. By means of it, the transition is effected from the Sub- to the Main Action. Bassanio has been the connecting link between Antonio and Shylock. The tragic Sub-Action has been completed. Shylock's dramatic life having ended, he has disappeared. Bassanio now, by means of the Ring Episode, becomes the connecting link between Antonio and Portia. When that is effected the Main Action resumes movement.

2. The disguise of Portia and Nerissa is eventually revealed by these rings. To perceive the humor of the Ring Episode, one fact must be remembered, the spectator knows that of which all in that court-room, except Portia and Nerissa, are ignorant, *viz.*, that the lawyer is Portia, the clerk is Nerissa. If Portia and Nerissa were what they pretended to be, a lawyer, a clerk, there would have been no humor. It is because they are women, and the wives of these men, that the Ring Episode is humorous. Not at once, but later, toward the very conclusion of the play, explanations are made.

When the party reaches Belmont, Nerissa and Gratiano have a quarrel. The latter, evidently in reply to a question from Nerissa, says:

By yonder moon I swear you do me wrong;  
In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk.

Portia inquires *What's the matter?* On being informed she says to Gratiano, *You were to blame*, and then mischievously adds:

I gave my love a ring and made him swear  
Never to part with it; and here he stands;  
I dare be sworn for him he would not leave it  
Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth  
That the world masters.

Gratiano informed Portia that Bassanio gave the ring to the judge. Bassanio acknowledges it. Portia, then, in the most delightful manner banters Bassanio. Her bantering is full of lambent humor, playful fancy. Antonio intercedes for Bassanio. Portia responds:

Then you shall be his surety. Give him this  
And bid him keep it better than the other.

As a result, the secret is revealed, *viz., that Portia was the doctor, Nerissa there her clerk.*

This Episode is a fitting conclusion to the revelation of Portia's character. At the beginning of the play she was the dutiful daughter, abiding by the will of her father. She was the maiden longing to be loved. Then she appears as the much-wooed

heiress. By her witty criticism of her suitors she manifests her keen intellect, her womanly intuition. When Bassanio has made the successful choice, she surrenders herself unreservedly to the man she loves. In the Trial Scene, contrasted with Shylock, who represents justice, she is the embodiment of mercy. In this character she personates a man. On the conclusion of the Trial Scene her womanhood asserts itself in the mischief, fun, frolic, of the Ring Episode. That is the last manifestation of her girlhood. Later, that gives way to the loving wife, the accomplished hostess, welcoming to her home at Belmont her husband's friend Antonio, the lovers Gratiano and Nerissa, Lorenzo and Jessica, and the young friends of Bassanio. She is the dominating spirit of the Catastrophe. She was that in the Trial Scene; in the Episode of the Rings; in her own mansion at Belmont. As she reveals herself in these different situations, we find her *trained in the prodigality of nature*. In her, perfectly balanced, highly developed, we find the practical and the imaginative, the emotional and the intellectual, sweetness and strength. Over all, and pervading all, is that indefinable but unmistakable quality which we call charm. She is an example of radiant womanhood.

In a perfect work of Art all the factors must Complement and Balance each other. This play conforms to that canon. The Catastrophe Complements and Balances the Introduction. The first Scene of the play is at Venice. The second is at Belmont. The Catastrophe balances this. The trial is held at Venice. The last Scene of the play is at Bel-

mont. At the beginning, the feeling is one of sadness: Antonio was sad; Portia's *little body was weary of this great world*. The conclusion of the play is one of unalloyed happiness: Antonio's life is saved; three of his argosies return safely to port; the three pairs of lovers are happily married. Thus, the end Complements and Balances the beginning.

In this play human affection is portrayed in its two forms, friendship, love; that is, affection for one of the same sex, affection for one of the opposite sex. The friendship between Antonio and Bassanio reaches the highest development. The love between Bassanio and Portia is also perfect and complete. By a master stroke of the dramatist, Antonio is the means by which the latter is accomplished. He was the surety for the loan which enabled Bassanio to woo and win Portia. At the last he is again the surety by which the pretended quarrel between Portia and Bassanio about the rings is amicably settled. Addressing Portia, Antonio said:

I once did lend my body for his wealth;  
Which, but for him that had your husband's ring,  
Had quite miscarried: I dare be bound again,  
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord  
Will never more break faith advisedly.

Thus, the love of Bassanio and Portia has hinged on the friendship between Antonio and Bassanio. In this play Shakespeare has portrayed beautifully and perfectly human affection in its two forms, friendship and love. In view of this, how exquisite

is the apostrophe in the last Act, first to moonlight, secondly, to music:

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank! *seq.*

There are certain latent affinities between the aspects of Nature and human thought and emotion. "Sunshine is associated with the unfolding of nature's products, the physical quickening of human life."<sup>1</sup> Night under some of its aspects is associated with deeds which are dark and tragic. Macbeth had consummated the plan for the murder of Banquo and Fleance. The murderers had gone forth, the night approaches. Between the oncoming darkness in Nature and the darkness of moral death gathering over Macbeth the analogue is perfect:

Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to the rooky wood;  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse.

When night is illumined by soft moonlight, it suggests repose, reflection, the tender passion. It was on such a night as this that Portia and Bassanio, and their followers, meet, after the trial, at Belmont. When Portia reaches there she hears music:

Peace, ho! the moon sleeps with Endymion  
And would not be awaked.

The relevancy and beauty of Portia's words are realized when we remember that in Greek mythol-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Brown, *The Fine Arts*, p. 156.

ogy Endymion is the sunset with which the moon is in love.

Equally perfect and appropriate, judged from the standpoint of dramatic art, is Shakespeare's apostrophe, in this Catastrophe, to music. While Art assumes various forms, architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry, yet its ultimate object is the same. Notwithstanding this fact, the form assumed by it is an important factor. And each form, be it the marble of the temple or the statue, color in painting, sound in music, rhythmical words in poetry, possesses its own quality of beauty, produces its own impression which is distinct in kind. Each appeals to the imagination through its own channel and produces an effect which is *sui generis*,—the building, an architectural charm; the statue, a sculpturesque charm; the picture, a pictorial charm; the symphony, a musical charm; the drama, a poetic charm. Shakespeare recognizes this canon of Art, and while he uses the two highest forms of Art, music and poetry, he uses them always with precision and strict regard to the nature of each. By means of music he appeals primarily to the emotions. By means of poetry he appeals primarily to the imaginative reason. In this play he introduces a love-song whilst Bassanio stands before the caskets. Again, at the conclusion of the drama, when the tragic has given way to the comic, when hate has disappeared and love resumes its sway, he introduces music.

The play ends, but not the action. The last words are spoken by Portia:



It is almost morning,  
And yet I am sure you are not satisfied  
Of these events at full. Let us go in;  
And charge us there upon inter'gatories,  
And we will answer all things faithfully.

Shakespeare does not bring the action to a conclusion. This is a quality of great Art. It is the charm of the incomplete. It satisfies that artistic craving for an element of suggestion, a stimulus to the imagination. It is what Sir Charles Eastlake calls "the judicious unfinish of a consummate artist." While this is a characteristic of Art in its various forms, it applies particularly to the arts of motion, music and poetry. In this quality they resemble men. Incompleteness is one characteristic of breathing, growing, living men. Great Art, therefore, in order to portray human life, must and does have a quality of incompleteness. Browning expresses the thought perfectly :

Growth came when looking your last on them all,  
You turned your eyes inwardly, one fine day,  
And cried with a start—"What if we, so small,  
Be greater and grander the while than they ?  
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature ?  
In both, of such lower types are we  
Precisely because of our wider nature;  
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.  
To-day's brief passion limits their range,  
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.  
They are perfect—how else ? they shall never change:  
We are faulty—why not ? We have time in store.

The Artificer's hand is not arrested  
With us; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished;  
They stand for our copy, and, once invested  
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished." <sup>1</sup>

The play reaches a conclusion; the action, however, does not end. Like human life, of which it is a portrayal, it is incomplete, imperfect, and therefore great and enduring Art, for "what 's come to perfection perishes." When the play concludes we find ourselves gazing, with a vague and wistful speculation, into the open door of that mansion at Belmont through which Portia and her friends have entered; and longing to hear Portia, *upon inter'gatories*, . . . *answer all things faithfully.*

<sup>1</sup> *Old Pictures in Florence.*

## CHAPTER V

### JULIUS CÆSAR

#### INTRODUCTION

##### I

**N**EARLY every fact mentioned in this play is taken by Shakespeare from Plutarch. Plutarch's record of them is a history; Shakespeare's is a drama. Wherein is the difference between these two forms of literary composition? A history is a narration of events; a drama is a representation of events by means of action. Plutarch tells us about the conspiracy which resulted in the death of Julius Cæsar. Shakespeare puts the conspirators on the stage; we hear them speak; we see them act.

This, however, is not the only difference between a history and a drama. They differ not only in form, but also in nature.

History and Poetry [says Aristotle] are distinguished herein, that the one relates what has occurred, the other relates of what nature the occurrence has been. . . . Poetry refers to the general, and history to the particular. The general is how such and such a man would speak or act according to probability or necessity. . . .

The particular, on the contrary, is what Alcibiades has done or suffered.<sup>1</sup>

Dramatic poetry is not actual but imaginative truth. It appeals not so much to the intellect as to the imagination; to the imaginative reason; to the intellectual emotions. Poets are the ideal interpreters of life. Shakespeare adds to Plutarch's facts a subtle, indefinable ideality. After Claudio had cruelly slandered Hero and then deserted her at the marriage altar, Friar Francis advised that she be hidden, and a notice of her death published. The effect of this, he said, would be:

When [Claudio] shall hear she died upon his words,  
The idea of her life shall sweetly creep  
Into his study of imagination,  
And every lovely organ of her life  
Shall come apparell'd in more precious habit,  
More moving-delicate and full of life,  
Into the eye and prospect of his soul,  
Than when she lived indeed.

In these words, which are the very highest reach of imaginative poetry, Shakespeare describes his own work in this drama. By his vivifying imagination he resurrects these men.

. . . graves at [his] command  
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth  
By [his] so potent art.

He recreates them. He reveals to us *the idea*,

<sup>1</sup> *Poetics*, section ix.; cf. Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*, Book II., chap. iv., pp. 1, 2; Newman, *Aristotle's Poetics*, section 4.

*i. e.*, the image, of their lives, and this he does so perfectly that we perceive not so much the body as the mind and spirit. Not to the naked eye, but to the eye of the mind are revealed the thoughts, emotions, intentions; the conflict between *blood and judgement*; the subtle interflow of good and evil; in a word, all those powerful, though silent and invisible, forces which constituted the springs of action in each of these men. As a result, *every organ of their lives* is disclosed, and Brutus, Cassius, Cæsar, Antony, and the others appear before us not as shades of the departed, but as living men.

Of course, this idealism of the poet must be founded on realism. He must possess imaginative verity.<sup>1</sup> He must see into the very *heart of heart* of a man or woman, and in his drama portray that man or woman with perfect truthfulness. Shakespeare would have erred if he had ascribed to Portia the morals of Cleopatra, or to Brutus the baseness of Iago. At the same time historical accuracy in every minor detail is not a requisite of a great drama. Sciolists speak of Shakespeare's incorrect history. By so doing they manifest ignorance of the nature

<sup>1</sup> "I know full well that the sentiments in a drama must be in accordance with the assumed character of the person who utters them. They can therefore not bear the stamp of absolute truth; it is enough if they are poetically true, if we must admit that this character under these circumstances, with these passions, could not have judged otherwise. But, on the other hand, this poetical truth must also approach to the absolute, and the poet must never think so unphilosophically as to assume that a man could desire evil for evil's sake, that a man could act on vicious principles, knowing them to be vicious, and boast of them to himself and to others."—Lessing, *Dramatic Notes*.

of a historical drama, and also their lack of the critical faculty. Such, in the words of Sir William Davenant,<sup>1</sup> "take away the liberty of the Poet, and fetter his feet in the shackles of the Historian." Shakespeare did not, nor was it necessary that he should, follow history literally.

Into Brutus' mouth he puts these words:

My ancestors did from the streets of Rome  
The Tarquin drive, when he was call'd a king.

This is not historically correct. Brutus was not of that family. "Brutus, who expelled the Tarquins," says Froude,<sup>2</sup> "put his sons to death, and died childless; Marcus Brutus came of good plebeian family, with no glories of tyrannicide about them; but an imaginary genealogy suited well with the spurious heroics which veiled the motives of Cæsar's murderers."

Plutarch says Cæsar was stabbed twenty-three times. Shakespeare speaks of Cæsar's *three and thirty wounds*. As a matter of history Cæsar never uttered the words *Et tu Brute!* They were original with Shakespeare. The latter was not a historian, but a poet. He knew that if Cæsar, when he saw his trusted friend Brutus raise the dagger, had expressed his thoughts and feelings, it would have been in such words as *Et tu Brute!* For, as Antony in his speech said:

. . . when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,  
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,  
Quite vanquish'd him.

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Gondibert*.

<sup>2</sup> *Cæsar*, p. 507.



These words, therefore, while not historically, are poetically true.<sup>1</sup>

I have descanted somewhat at length upon the difference between a history and a drama, because that difference is essential, and must always be borne in mind by the critical student. A knowledge of that difference guards against an incorrect method of studying a historical drama. It must be studied, not as history, not with reference to the correctness or incorrectness of its statements, but as a drama. To do the former is entirely to misconceive the intention of the poet, and, as a consequence, to fail utterly in comprehending and appreciating the poem. It is a mistake similar to that pointed out so long ago by Plutarch<sup>2</sup>: "He that goes about to split wood with a key, and to unlock a door with an axe, does not so much misemploy his instruments, as deprive himself of the proper use of both."

Human life is dominated by two great forces, Free-will, Fate. Both these forces are referred to in this drama. Cassius alludes to the former when, in his first conversation with Brutus, he said:

Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

Cæsar refers to the latter; *viz.*, Fate, overruling Providence, when he asks Calpurnia:

<sup>1</sup> "Truth, narrative and past, is the idol of historians (who worship a dead thing), and truth, operative and by its effects continually alive, is the mistress of poets, who hath not her existence in matter, but in reason."—Sir Wm. Davenant, Preface to *Gondibert*.

<sup>2</sup> *Morals: Of Hearing.*

What can be avoided  
Whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?

Shakespeare has written tragedies portraying both these phases of human life. In this play it is the latter which he depicts. Cæsar is not the direct cause of his own death. In this drama he is not active, but passive. Forces outside of himself bring the action to a Climax. Other forces, still outside of himself, carry the action forward to the Catastrophe. While he is the cause of the action, he is such not as doing anything in the drama, not as an actor therein, but as representing a sentiment, embodying a principle, *viz.*, Imperialism. While living he is the passive cause of the conspiracy; when dead, he is the equally passive cause of the retribution. It is his wounds,

Which, like dumb mouths, do ope their ruby lips,  
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue,

that caused Antony to speak. It is his

. . . wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,

which had power to

. . . move  
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny,

that demand vengeance.

A third characteristic of this play, wherein it differs from most others is, no one person dominates it. The action centres around Julius Cæsar. He, however, is passive. The fore part, all preceding

the Climax, is dominated by the conspirators. Of these, at the beginning, Cassius is the leader. He soon gives way to Brutus, who becomes the master-spirit. The after part, all following the Climax, is dominated by the avengers, of whom Antony is the controlling personality. But no one person dominates the action of this play from beginning to end, as did Henry V., Richard III., Coriolanus, Hamlet, in the plays bearing those names. This drama, unlike those, is not a delineation of a person, but of a principle. It describes not so much the fortunes of Cæsar as it does the conflict between Republicanism and Imperialism. True, Antony said,

All the conspirators, save only he [Brutus],  
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar:

This opinion is questionable. But whether Antony was correct or incorrect, of one fact there is no doubt, *viz.*, the avowed and ostensible motive which governed the conspirators in assassinating Cæsar was not dislike of him personally, but the belief that he embodied a principle which threatened the life of the Republic. As the play proceeds, this idea is iterated and reiterated. This was the final consideration which induced Brutus to join the conspirators. He reiterated this opinion in his first conference with them. He expressed regret that in order to destroy the principle which, as he thought, Cæsar embodied, it was necessary to kill Cæsar. After the murder he told Antony the motive which led him to stab his friend was

. . . pity to the general wrong of Rome.

It was the one reason which Brutus gave to the citizens for the justification of the assassination. The motive which governed him, and which was announced as the motive of all, was a desire to save the Republic:

I slew my best lover for the good of Rome.

Cæsar's spirit, as the expression of treason against the Republic, was the cause and object of the attack.

As Cæsar's spirit was the cause of the action, so was it also of the reaction. It caused the conspiracy which culminated in the assassination. It likewise caused the retribution which brought to Cassius and Brutus defeat and death. As Antony stood over Cæsar's mangled body, apostrophizing it as

. . . thou bleeding piece of earth,

he said the consequence of the murder would be:

A curse shall light upon the limbs of men;  
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy;

. . . . .  
And Cæsar's spirit, ranging for revenge,  
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,  
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice,  
Cry "Havoc," and let slip the dogs of war:

Antony was correct.

Nor did Cæsar's spirit cease to range for revenge until it brought death to Brutus and Cassius. At the close of the battle of Philippi, just previous to committing suicide, Brutus said:

O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!  
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails.

As I have previously said, no one man dominates this play. It does not treat of Julius Cæsar as an individual; it does not dramatize his personal life and fortunes. It treats of him only so far as he is the embodiment of a principle, *viz.*, Imperialism. The conspirators likewise are portrayed not as individuals, but as personifying, individually and collectively, the counter principle, *viz.*, Republicanism. The unity of the drama is not in a person but in the action. That action relates to the conspiracy, its formation, its culmination, its consequence; the avowed object of which conspiracy was, by killing Cæsar, to preserve to the Roman people

Peace, freedom and liberty!

In conclusion, this play is unlike most of the Shakesperian dramas in that it is simple. I use the word in its original sense (Latin *simplex*, not complicated). The action of the drama is not involved. There are no Sub-Actions. There are several Episodes. These are very brief, and of minor importance. The movement from beginning to end consists almost wholly of the Main Action. That

moves steadily upwards to the Climax. From there it advances, almost without interruption, to the Catastrophe.

The conflict between the two principles, Imperialism and Republicanism, is the theme of the drama. This is technically the Central Idea. It will be found, as we proceed with the study, that every character, every deed, every word, in the play is related to this idea. This is the key-note of the action, and this key-note is struck in the opening Scene of the Introduction.

This is done, not by means of a conversation, as in the *Merchant of Venice*; or of a narration, as in *Othello* or *Hamlet*; but by an action. This action is not the Main Action of the drama. It introduces and foreshadows that.

This opening Scene presents to us Flavius and Marullus, Tribunes, and a rabble of Citizens. Between the former and the latter there is a war of words; on the part of the citizens, good-natured, humorous; on the part of the Tribunes, serious. By means of this dispute Shakespeare begins the play, and foreshadows the tragic conflict which forms its Main Action.

The drama derives distinction both from the place and time of the action.

We are learning that European history, from its first glimmerings to our own day, is one unbroken drama, no part of which can be rightly understood without reference to the other parts which come before and after it. We are learning that of this great drama Rome is the centre,



the point to which all roads lead, and from which all roads lead no less. The world of independent Greece stands on one side of it; the world of modern Europe stands on another.<sup>1</sup>

The time was one of the most important epochs in the history of the Roman people. To this city, after his victory at Munda, Julius Cæsar was returning. The common people had gathered in the streets to *make holiday to see Cæsar, and to rejoice in his triumph*. They had decked his images with festal ornaments; had hung on them trophies. The Tribunes, seeing in this popular worship of Cæsar danger to the Republic, attempted to check the mob.

Wherefore rejoice? What conquest brings he home?  
What tributaries follow him to Rome,  
To grace in captive bonds his chariot-wheels? *seq.*

This rebuke of Marullus is re-enforced by the gentler counsel of Flavius.

The danger to the Republic exists not only in the fickleness and thoughtlessness of *the fool multitude*, but also in the character of Julius Cæsar. Shakespeare closes the Scene by an intimation of that. Flavius says:

These growing feathers pluck'd from Cæsar's wing  
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
Who else would soar above the view of men  
And keep us all in servile fearfulness.

The very best commentary on this opening Scene is the words of Cassius, uttered a little later:

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, *Unity of History*.

Those that with haste will make a mighty fire  
Begin it with weak straws: what trash is Rome,  
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves  
For the base matter to illuminate  
So vile a thing as Cæsar!

This Scene is immediately followed by the entrance of Cæsar. He appears *in procession with Music*, and is accompanied by a great crowd, in which is a Soothsayer. Cæsar speaks. Casca, with the utmost deference, orders silence. Cæsar commands Calpurnia to stand in Antonius' way. He also commands Antonius to touch Calpurnia. Antony acknowledges Cæsar's supreme power:

When Cæsar says "do this," it is perform'd.

Cæsar is about to retire when the Soothsayer bids him *Beware the ides of March*. With the irony of fate, this warning is repeated by Brutus. It is reiterated by the Soothsayer. Then Cæsar, refusing to heed it,—

He is a dreamer; let us leave him,—

passes off the stage, accompanied by all except Brutus and Cassius.

In this first and brief glimpse of Cæsar, Shakespeare has emphasized Cæsar's commanding authority, and also the acknowledgment of the same by Antony and the mob. These are the two dangers which threaten the Republic.

Cæsar, the victim, Antony, his friend and avenger, have been introduced. Shakespeare now

brings forward Brutus and Cassius, the leaders of the conspiracy. In the conference which follows, the characters of these two men are revealed, and as well their conception of the character of Cæsar; also, the first efforts are made for the formation of the conspiracy. It is to be noted that the first suggestion to this end comes from Cassius. He, at the beginning, is the dominating force of the conspiracy.

The danger which threatens the Republic had hardly been referred to by Cassius, when his words are emphasized by a *Flourish, and shout*. In response Brutus says:

What means this shouting? I do fear, the people  
Choose Cæsar for their king.

The appeal to Brutus' patriotism is not in vain.

Ay, do you fear it?  
Then must I think you would not have it so.

Brutus responds:

I would not, Cassius; yet I love him well.  
But wherefore do you hold me here so long?  
What is it that you would impart to me?  
If it be aught toward the general good,  
Set honour in one eye and death i' the other,  
And I will look on both indifferently.

Cassius then begins the recital of that story, the subject of which is *honour*. He proceeds to describe Cæsar as but a man, subject to the same frailties as others. Once, when swimming the

Tiber, he was on the point of drowning, and cried,  
*Help me, Cassius, or I sink.* Another time

He had a fever when he was in Spain.

Cassius then speaks of his name, and compares it  
with that of Brutus.

Why should that name be sounded more than yours? *seq.*

Such is Cassius' description of the man who

. . . doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus.

Cassius' words are not without effect. What that  
effect is Brutus himself tells us:

Brutus had rather be a villager  
Than to repute himself a son of Rome  
Under these hard conditions as this time  
Is like to lay upon us.

Cæsar and his train returning from the games now  
re-enter. Brutus observes, and calls Cassius' at-  
tention to—

The angry spot doth glow on Cæsar's brow,  
And all the rest look like a chidden train.

Shakespeare for a moment now directs attention  
from Cæsar to Cassius, at this time the most active  
of the conspirators. With fine foreshadowing he  
puts in Cæsar's mouth this description of Cassius:

Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;  
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

Antony, lacking Cæsar's insight and foresight, and in order to repress any fear in Cæsar, replies:

Fear him not, Cæsar; he 's not dangerous.

Cæsar responds by a fine analysis of Cassius' character, and resents any imputation of cowardice.

I rather tell thee what is to be fear'd  
Than what I fear; for always I am Cæsar.

And then, with one of those minor touches indicating the finest artistic sense, Shakespeare makes Cæsar refer to one of his physical infirmities. He says to Antony:

Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf.

Cæsar and his train make their exit, not to appear again in the Introduction.

Casca then relates to Brutus and Cassius what had taken place. Three times Antony offered Cæsar a crown. Each time Cæsar had refused it. Then Cæsar swooned. To this Casca adds, once more striking the chord of Cæsar's dangerous ambition,

I could tell you more news too: Marullus and Flavius, for pulling scarfs off Cæsar's images, are put to silence.

Casca now retires, to be followed soon by Brutus, into whose ears Cassius speaks this parting injunction, *think of the world*. Brutus, although profoundly stirred by Cassius, has not yet been entirely won over. The latter determines to make one final effort, of the success of which he has no doubt:

I will this night,  
In several hands, in at his windows throw,  
As if they came from several citizens,  
Writings all tending to the great opinion  
That Rome holds of his name; *seq.*

Shakespeare's portrait of Cæsar in this second Scene of the Introduction seems to many surprising, inexplicable. Probably no other historical character is so frequently mentioned by Shakespeare as Julius Cæsar. He is referred to in twelve plays. Between the two men there seems to have been the strongest intellectual affinity. Shakespeare was cognizant of, appreciated fully, Cæsar's greatness. In *Hamlet* he describes him as *the mightiest Julius*, and again, as *Imperial Cæsar*. Later in this play, he is similarly described by Antony as

The noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times.

Why, then, in this Introduction does Shakespeare describe him as

A man of such a feeble temper?

In a great drama no more, no other, elements of a character are portrayed than those which are evoked by, are in vital connection with, the action of the drama. This is true of a play as a whole, and also of the different parts. The subject of this play is not, as one might infer from the title, Julius Cæsar. In fact, he is not even the leading character in the play.



To digress for a moment. Amongst other proofs of that is the scale of delineation. In the play there are 2417 verses. Of these Brutus speaks 727, Cassius 507, these two aggregating 1234, or more than half. Antony speaks 327, Octavius Cæsar 47, while Julius Cæsar speaks but 154 verses. The scale of delineation is not the only test as to the importance of a dramatic character. Still it is one, and must be considered by the critical student.

Julius Cæsar was not the principal actor in this drama. Brutus occupies that position. Julius Cæsar as a great statesman, writer, general, is hardly referred to. Those attributes of his character are outside of, extraneous to, the scope of this action. His connection with this play is simply that of an unpatriotic and ambitious man grasping at power. Such was the conception of him which the conspirators had. It was to destroy such a man, and thus save the Republic, that the conspiracy was formed. Hence the dramatist, in order, ostensibly, to induce Brutus to join the conspiracy, really, to enlist the sympathies of the audience for the conspirators, and to afford some justification for them, makes Cassius in this Introduction describe Cæsar as but a man; a man physically weak, mentally vacillating, and at the same time governed by an ambition both overmastering and dangerous. This result, so far as it affects the spectator, is intensified by Shakespeare making Cæsar himself speak of his deafness; and still more by Cæsar's swooning when the crown was offered to him. Thus by such portrayal of Cæsar, as a physically

weak and withal dangerous man, Shakespeare gives some justification for the assassination, and brings us into sympathy with the conspirators.

In Scene 2 the poet appeals wholly to the intellect. The reference to Cæsar's weakness is not for the purpose of awakening sympathy for him but, by making manifest the incongruity between such a man and the position to which he aspires, to give a reason for the conspiracy. If the spectator's interest is to be perfectly, wholly enlisted, both intellect and emotions must be profoundly stirred. This Shakespeare does in the third and last Scene of the Introduction by calling Nature and the supernatural to his assistance. He uses them as a background for human thought and emotion.<sup>1</sup> The murderous deed is heralded by disturbances in Nature.

In ancient times, as well as in our day, the elements were believed to be in very close sympathy with human joy or sorrow. It was believed that Nature, both animate and inanimate, was profoundly disturbed by impending disaster. The violent deaths of kings and rulers were supposed to be preceded by perturbations of Nature.

Thou see'st the heavens, as troubled with man's act,  
Threaten his bloody stage.

This is but one of many references by Shakespeare to this superstition.

<sup>1</sup> "To the poet . . . all nature appears to be, in a peculiar sense, a representation, a repetition, a projection in the realm of matter, of the immaterial processes of thought within the mind"—Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*.

This Scene opens with *thunder and lightning*. The environment is in perfect harmony with the action. Nature, stormy, threatening, filled with prodigies, forms a sombre background to the impending tragedy. Cicero and Casca enter. From these commotions in Nature Casca infers:

Either there is a civil strife in heaven,  
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,  
Incenses them to send destruction.

*Civil strife*, not in heaven, but in Rome, is that which is foreshadowed. Casca relates other unnatural occurrences, and then concludes:

When these prodigies  
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say  
"These are their reasons; they are natural";  
For, I believe, they are portentous things  
Unto the climate that they point upon.

In order to keep Cæsar before the spectator, and to bring him into close relation to these prodigies, Cicero asks:

Comes Cæsar to the Capitol to-morrow?

Cicero, who is but a passive spectator, not an actor, in this drama, now retires and Cassius enters. Between perturbed Nature and his agitated mind there is the warmest sympathy. In response to Casca's question, *What night is this?* he replies:

A very pleasing night to honest men.

So pleasing, indeed, so expressive of the rebellion within him, that he

. . . bar'd [his] bosom to the thunder-stone;  
And when the cross blue lightning seem'd to open  
The breast of heaven, I did present myself  
Even in the aim and very flash of it.

Further, he sees and hears in these *dreadful heralds*, sent by the mighty gods:

. . . instruments of fear and warning  
Unto some monstrous state.

He then compares a man to *this dreadful night*, and says he is *fearful, as these strange eruptions are*. Casca guesses correctly. Cæsar is the man. Casca then proceeds:

Indeed, they say the senators to-morrow  
Mean to establish Cæsar as a king;  
And he shall wear his crown by sea and land,  
In every place, save here in Italy.

Cassius suggests two ways by which Romans may preserve their freedom: either suicide or armed resistance. He finds Casca responsive to the latter. Without further delay, or attempt at secrecy, Cassius openly announces the formation of the conspiracy.

There 's a bargain made: *seq.*

Cinna, one of the conspirators, now appears. He informs Cassius that Decius Brutus and Trebonius

have repaired to Pompey's porch, and that Metellus Cimber has gone to seek him at the latter's house. Brutus still hesitates. Not yet has he unreservedly and formally joined the conspiracy. As to

Him and his worth and our great need of him,  
there is unanimity of sentiment. Cinna says:

O Cassius, if you could  
But win the noble Brutus to our party.

And later:

O, he sits high in all the people's hearts:  
And that which would appear offence in us,  
His countenance, like richest alchemy,  
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.

Cassius has previously said:

. . . three parts of him  
Is ours already, and the man entire  
Upon the next encounter yields him ours.

And so he does. When Brutus again appears he has decided to join the conspiracy.

#### GROWTH

#### II., I, 2

*It must be by his death:* These words of Brutus are the dividing line between the Introduction and the Growth. The last words uttered by Brutus in the Introduction had been to Cassius:

For this time I will leave you:  
To-morrow, if you please to speak with me,  
I will come home to you; or, if you will,  
Come home to me, and I will wait for you.

Cassius responds:

I will do so: till then, think of the world.

Brutus then makes his exit, not to appear again in the Introduction. At that time he had reached no definite decision in reference to the conspiracy. When he first appears in the Growth he has fully determined that Cæsar must die. He joins the conspiracy, and shortly thereafter the Main Action of the drama begins.

The scene is Brutus' garden; the time, night. The stars are shining brightly; all nature is serene and tranquil. Lucius, a boy, is sleeping peacefully. Brutus says:

What, Lucius, ho!  
I cannot, by the progress of the stars,  
Give guess how near to day. Lucius, I say!  
I would it were my fault to sleep so soundly.  
When, Lucius, when? awake, I say! what, Lucius!

Thus Shakespeare ushers in the action of this drama, which is to the intensest degree tragic. Unlike most of the Shakespeare plays there is in this one very little humor. The nearest approach to that is, here and there, a pun. But Shakespeare tones down the tragic, prevents it from becoming monotonous and oppressive, and at the same time



intensifies the effect by means of Contrast. The description of peaceful nature and a sleeping boy makes more vivid the convulsing soul-conflict raging in Brutus, and the still greater conflict impending in Rome.

From the time Brutus joins the conspiracy he becomes its leader. Shakespeare, therefore, in the fore part of the Growth, allows us to see into the mind and heart of Brutus. By means of a soliloquy he reveals his motives. Between himself and Cæsar there had existed the truest friendship. Cassius has already informed us that Cæsar loved Brutus:

Cæsar doth bear me hard, but he loves Brutus.

Brutus was fully cognizant of this, and so stated in his funeral oration: *As Cæsar lov'd me, I weep for him*. Antony adds his testimony to the same effect. In his funeral oration he said:

For Brutus, as you know, was Cæsar's angel.

Brutus reciprocated Cæsar's love. So that Brutus' decision, *It must be by his death!* was not the outcome of any *personal cause*. On the contrary, it was an offence against his own affections. Nor was it because of anything Cæsar had done, or Cæsar was. It was the dread of what he might, in the future, become:

And, since the quarrel  
Will bear no colour for the thing he is,  
Fashion it thus; that what he is, augmented,  
Would run to these and these extremities: *seq.*

This soliloquy, of which the above lines are the conclusion, is a masterly presentation of that struggle which takes place in a good man when two duties conflict. Loyalty to his friend, loyalty to his country, are the duties which in Brutus are contending for mastery. The latter conquers. Love of country was the sentiment which controlled him and was the mainspring of his action. His reflections are thoroughly instinct with the truest and highest patriotism. The decision reached by him, although purely unselfish, perfectly patriotic, was mistaken.

Virtue itself turns vice, being misapplied.

It was but the first of a series of errors, which were fatal to himself, ruinous to the conspiracy.

Most dangerous  
Is that temptation that doth goad us on  
To sin in loving virtue.

Lucius enters. He gives Brutus a letter. Brutus inquires:

Is not to-morrow, boy, the ides of March ?

When Cæsar first appeared the Soothsayer had bidden him *Beware the ides of March*. Since then Brutus had reached the conclusion, *It must be by his death !* Here again, incidentally, Brutus refers to *the ides of March*. Thus once more Shakespeare has foreshadowed both Cæsar's death and the time of its occurrence.

The letter Brutus reads:

The exhalations whizzing in the air  
Give so much light that I may read by them.

These references to the supernatural, to prodigies, to portents, occur all through the play. In considering them we must remember that to the men of that day they were real and potent.<sup>1</sup> Brutus, Cæsar, Cassius, all were influenced by them. We must read the play, and particularly these references to the supernatural, in the light of that day.

The letter calls on Brutus to save his country. Its author we know. It produces the desired effect. Brutus yields:

O Rome, I make thee promise;  
If the redress will follow, thou receivest  
Thy full petition at the hand of Brutus!

Cassius was right. Of Brutus he had said:

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,  
Thy honourable metal may be wrought  
From that it is disposed.

The coherence and interdependence of the minor parts of the drama, so far as we have studied it, are perfect. These minor details are but different parts of a work of Art which is organic. Speaking of the critical faculty in its application to the art-product,

<sup>1</sup> "Astrology was not such mere imposition as it is generally supposed to have been. It is counted as a science by so sound and sober a scholar as Melanchthon, and even Bacon allows it a place among the sciences, though admitting that it 'had better intelligence and confederacy with the imagination of man than with his reason.'" —Max Müller, *The Science of Language*, Lecture I.

Sir William Hamilton says,<sup>1</sup> "The less cultivated mind lingers over the parts, the multifarious details; the more educated combines these in unity." To this I add: the perfectly educated student is the one that recognizes the fact that in a work of Art the details form a Unity; and conversely, that this Unity is composed of Variety. My aim in the study of this drama is to preserve the balance between the minor parts and the play as a complete and perfect work of dramatic art, with the ultimate purpose of making manifest the fact that while, like every other art-product, it possesses Variety, its primary quality is Unity.

Once more the poet allows us to see *poor Brutus, with himself at war*.

Since Cassius first did whet me against Cæsar,  
I have not slept.  
Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:  
The Genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council; and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection.

Lucius now announces Cassius and the other conspirators. Brutus welcomes each one, and then he and Cassius whisper. While they are so doing, Decius, Casca, Cinna, have a brief discussion as to the points of the compass. They cannot agree as to the direction in which to look for the rising sun.

<sup>1</sup> *The Beautiful and the Sublime*.

The object of the poet by this brief Episode is to make manifest the unsettled condition of the conspirators' minds. Brutus again shakes hands with the others. *Give me your hands all over, one by one*, he says. Cassius then suggests: *And let us swear our resolution*. Brutus demurs: *No, not an oath*. This inaugurates a series of differences between Cassius and Brutus which extend to the battle of Philippi. In each case Brutus' motives are the best and truest. In each case his judgment is mistaken. Yet always his advice is followed. Again Cassius inquires:

But what of Cicero? shall we sound him?  
I think he will stand very strong with us.

Casca, Cinna, Metellus, agree with Cassius in this opinion. Again Brutus demurs. Cicero, whose influence and eloquence would have been of the greatest aid after the murder, is not invited to join the conspirators. Cassius then suggests the advisability of killing Mark Antony:

I think it is not meet,  
Mark Antony, so well beloved of Cæsar,  
Should outlive Cæsar.

Again Cassius is overruled by Brutus:

And for Mark Antony, think not of him;  
For he can do no more than Cæsar's arm  
When Cæsar's head is off.

Brutus' motives in this, as in the former case, are the noblest and most humane:

Let us be sacrificers, but not butchers, Caius.  
His judgment is ruinously mistaken.

. . . to be tender-minded  
Does not become a sword.

He saves the very man who becomes the principal avenger of Cæsar's murder.

The striking clock warns the conspirators of departing time. Before separating Cassius suggests:

But it is doubtful yet,  
Whether Cæsar will come forth to-day, or no;  
and then states that a change has recently taken place in him:

For he is superstitious grown of late,  
Quite from the main opinion he held once  
Of fantasy, of dreams and ceremonies.

Decius assures the conspirators that he can over-  
sway Cæsar:

For I can give his humour the true bent,  
And I will bring him to the Capitol.

Metellus suggests Caius Ligarius, on account of his enmity to Cæsar, as a valuable accession to their number. Brutus for once assents, and says to Metellus:

Send him but hither, and I'll fashion him.

As the day breaks the conspirators separate, and Brutus is left alone.



The action of the drama has made considerable progress. The plans for the murder of Cæsar have been perfected. An Episode now occurs, the touching interview between Portia and Brutus. The effect of it is twofold. It stops the progress of the action. A drama, like human life, of which it is the representation, needs periods of repose. Also, by means of Contrast, it intensifies the interest of the spectator.

Brutus calls for Lucius:

Boy ! Lucius !—Fast asleep ? It is no matter; *seq.*

Before the boy awakes, and while Brutus waits, Portia enters.

There are but two women in this play, Portia and Calpurnia. Both are wives. Neither of them takes any direct or dominant part in the action of the drama. They influence the action indirectly, through their husbands, and but faintly. Unlike most of the Shakespearian plays, in this the action is inaugurated and carried forward to the Catastrophe wholly by men.

In the interview in the early morn between Portia and Brutus the nobility of their natures is revealed. Brutus is anxious, oppressed with the weight of what he believes to be a great duty. Portia is loyal, loving, noble. But, in each, devotion to the other is dominant. Brutus says:

You are my true and honourable wife,  
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops  
That visit my sad heart.

Portia manifests her strength, endurance, love, by a self-inflicted wound.

I have made strong proof of my constancy,  
Giving myself a voluntary wound  
Here, in the thigh: can I bear that with patience,  
And not my husband's secrets?

A knocking is heard. Brutus speaks to Portia a few farewell words, words full of sadness and devotion:

Portia, go in a while;  
And by and by thy bosom shall partake  
The secrets of my heart.

Portia retires, nevermore to see Brutus. That *by and by* never comes.

By this Episode, following directly after the murderous plans of the conspirators have been completed, and preceding but a few hours the consummation of those plans in the murder of Cæsar, Shakespeare contrasts human love and unselfish devotion with violence and death. The action of the drama is, for the time being, stopped. The strain on the emotions of the spectator is temporarily relieved. The impending tragedy becomes more awful.

Lucius now enters and tells Brutus: *Here is a sick man that would speak with you.* It is, says Brutus, *Caius Ligarius, that Metellus spake of.* Brutus tells him of an *exploit worthy of the name of honour.* He has such unquestioning confidence in Brutus that he decides to follow him:

Set on your foot,  
And with a heart new-fired I follow you,  
To do I know not what: but it sufficeth  
That Brutus leads me on.

While conferring they make their exit.

The scene of the drama is now transferred from Brutus' garden to Cæsar's palace. The time is the same, the early morning of the day on which Cæsar is assassinated. This, the last Scene of the Growth, opens, as did the last Scene of the Introduction, with *thunder and lightning*. As Cicero, Casca, Cassius, had been powerfully affected by the prodigies of nature, so likewise are Cæsar and Calpurnia. Cæsar says:

Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace to-night:  
Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out,  
"Help, ho! they murder Cæsar!"

Cæsar sends his servant with a message to the priest. Calpurnia enters. She

Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch,  
and entreats him not to go to the Capitol. The  
augurs also send a warning:

They would not have you to stir forth to-day.

Cæsar disregards entreaties and warning.

The gods do this in shame of cowardice:  
Cæsar should be a beast without a heart,  
If he should stay at home to-day for fear.

No, Cæsar shall not: danger knows full well  
That Cæsar is more dangerous than he.

And Cæsar shall go forth.

Calpurnia on her knees implores, and then Cæsar yields.

Mark Antony shall say I am not well;  
And, for thy humour, I will stay at home.

This decision is no sooner reached than Decius Brutus enters. He has just left the conspirators, and has come for the purpose of inducing Cæsar to go to the Capitol.

Cæsar, all hail! good morrow, worthy Cæsar:  
I come to fetch you to the senate-house.

Cæsar informs him he has decided not to go. Then at Decius' earnest request,—

Most mighty Cæsar, let me know some cause—  
he informs him of Calpurnia's dream:

She dreamt to-night she saw my statua,  
Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,  
Did run pure blood; *seq.*

Decius gives to the dream another interpretation, in the light of which Calpurnia's fears seem groundless. Cæsar reverses his decision and decides to go.

A change is taking place in Shakespeare's portraiture of Cæsar. In the Introduction the poet had dwelt on Cæsar's infirmities: his inability to swim

the Tiber; his fever in Spain; *his falling sickness*. Coupled with these physical weaknesses was his ungovernable ambition. A little later Cassius has informed us that he had grown superstitious. Shakespeare's intent, in thus portraying Cæsar in the fore part of the play, was to prevent his great personality overshadowing that of the conspirators, and also to give some justification for the conspiracy. That having been accomplished, Shakespeare now in the last Scene of the Growth (II., 2) begins to reveal the other phases of Cæsar's character, *viz.*, his puissance, his fearlessness. Omens, auguries, death itself, have no terror for him. And yet withal he was gentle and loving, and yields to Calpurnia's entreaties. We now see him as Antony describes him: *mighty, bold, royal*.

No sooner has he decided to go to the senate-house than Publius, a senator, and the conspirators Brutus, Ligarius, Metellus, Casca, Trebonius, Cinna, arrive at Cæsar's palace. Cæsar greets them cordially. While he is welcoming them Antony enters. This group is perfect and complete with the single exception of Cassius. All the conspirators are there save only he. Why was Cassius absent? Between him and Cæsar there was a mutual aversion and distrust. Cæsar considered him dangerous.

Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;  
He thinks too much: such men are dangerous.

I do not know the man I should avoid  
So soon as that spare Cassius.

It was necessary, in order that the action of the drama should progress, that Cæsar's suspicions should be lulled, and that he should go to the Capitol. Cassius' presence might have aroused Cæsar's misgivings, and so have been a deterrent force. Shakespeare, therefore, left him out of this group. He was not present at Cæsar's palace. Towards the other conspirators Cæsar's feelings were unsuspecting: on the contrary they were friendly. He considered their call a compliment. To them he said:

I thank you for your pains and courtesy.

He apologized for delaying them:

I am to blame to be thus waited for.

Before starting for the Capitol he said:

Good friends, go in, and taste some wine with me;  
And we, like friends, will straightway go together.

Although Brutus was governed by the purest patriotism, yet Cæsar's misplaced trust and friendship caused him a pang. In an *aside* he said:

That every like is not the same,

*i. e.*, that which is like or resembles a thing is not always that thing—that which resembles friendship is not always friendship,

O Cæsar,  
The heart of Brutus yearns to think upon!



Shakespeare, by forming this group, and placing it at the conclusion of the Growth and at the commencement of the Climax, manifests perfect technique. All the forces of the drama meet here, and for a moment are held quiescent and in perfect poise. The group is composed of Publius, a senator, who represents that part of the Roman senate which took no part in the action; of Cæsar, around whom the action centres; of the conspirators, with the single exception of Cassius, who are the Complicating Force of the drama, by means of whom the action is brought to a Climax; of Antony, who, together with Octavius Cæsar, is the Resolving Force, and by means of whom the action is carried forward from the Climax to the Catastrophe.

The Growth ends with this meeting in Cæsar's palace. The first step which these men take towards the Capitol is the commencement of the Climax.

#### CLIMAX

#### II., 3-III., 2

All great Art is characterized by transitions which are subtle, graduated: in the plastic and graphic arts, transitions of light and shade, of color; in music, transitions of tone; in poetry, transitions of thought and feeling.

The Climax of this play is one of the longest Climaxes Shakespeare ever wrote. By extending it to an exceptional length he has conformed to this canon of Art. All through the fore part of the play

he has tried to give some justification for the conspiracy. When that has reached its culmination in the death of Cæsar many spectators would extenuate the assassination on the ground of cruel necessity. Such believe Cæsar's ambition, coupled with his power, was a menace to the Republic. They have accepted Brutus' statement:

And pity to the general wrong of Rome—

. . . . .  
Hath done this deed on Cæsar.

At this stage of the action it becomes necessary for the poet to justify the impending retribution. For this purpose Shakespeare first modifies, then reverses, the sentiments of the spectators. He does not do this abruptly or violently. In order to avoid that, he expands the Climax to an exceptional length. As a consequence the change is slow, gradual, and therefore artistic. The death of Cæsar is represented very briefly. This is followed by the somewhat extended conversation between Antony and the conspirators; and, later, by the still more prolonged orations of Brutus and Antony. During this conversation and these orations, and as a result thereof, the thoughts and feelings of the spectators, which at the close of Brutus' speech are expressed by the words of the citizens:

Live, Brutus! live, live!

. . . . .  
Cæsar's better parts  
Shall be crown'd in Brutus,

on the conclusion of Antony's oration are expressed by the same citizens:

Come, away, away!  
We 'll burn his [Cæsar's] body in the holy place,  
And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.

This change wrought by the poet is as radical as that from day to night, and at the same time it is just as gradual.

Shakespeare begins the Climax with two Scenes which are episodic. Artemidorus, a teacher of rhetoric, enters, reading a paper which he intends later to give to Cæsar. In it he warns Cæsar against the conspirators, naming them one by one:

There is but one mind in all these men, and it is bent against Cæsar. If thou beest not immortal, look about you: security gives way to conspiracy. The mighty gods defend thee!

Artemidorus then expresses his own sentiments, and in so doing voices those of the spectators of the drama:

My heart laments that virtue cannot live  
Out of the teeth of emulation.

He closes his reflections by describing upon what a trivial act the life of Cæsar depends:

If thou read this, O Cæsar, thou mayst live;  
If not, the Fates with traitors do contrive.

The effect of this Episode is to intensify the emotional strain of the spectator. This effect is still

further enhanced by the next Scene, in which Shakespeare portrays the profound agitation of Portia. Like Calpurnia, she is overcome with anxiety for her husband, with the dread of impending danger. She is alarmed, terrified. She orders Lucius to run to the senate-house, and

. . . bring me word, boy, if thy lord look well,  
For he went sickly forth: and take good note  
What Cæsar doth, what suitors press to him.

She hears, or imagines she does,

. . . a bustling rumour, like a fray,  
And the wind brings it from the Capitol.

Later she meets the Soothsayer, and her trepidation and foreboding manifest themselves by her question:

Why, know'st thou any harm 's intended towards him  
[Cæsar]?

The Scene ends with Portia in a state of collapse:

I must go in. Ay me, how weak a thing  
The heart of woman is!

. . . . .  
. . . Oh, I grow faint!

From this time Portia ceases to be an actor in this drama.

In the first Scene of the Climax Shakespeare has revealed the intense solicitude of two friends of Cæsar, Artemidorus and the Soothsayer; in the

second, that of Portia, the wife of Brutus, the friend of the conspirators. Like two branches of a river, both flowing side by side toward the ocean, the dramatist thus represents two currents of intense feeling, both moving toward the Climax: one, that of the friends, the other, that of the enemies, of Cæsar.

In these two Scenes nothing has been done. They are, as I have said, episodic. Still there has been dramatic progress. Like the ominous lull which precedes the storm, by increasing the mental and emotional stress of the spectator these two Scenes have intensified his interest and prepared him for the action of the drama, which, on their conclusion, moves forward with the utmost rapidity.

Cæsar, his friends, the conspirators, now appear on their way to the Capitol. Meeting the Sooth-sayer, who had already, more than once, warned him to

Beware the ides of March,

Cæsar recalled the monition, and said to him:

The ides of March are come.

To which he replied:

Ay, Cæsar; but not gone.

Then, having fulfilled his mission in the drama, he disappears. Immediately thereafter Artemidorus presents his paper to Cæsar:

Hail, Cæsar! read this schedule.

Notwithstanding the most urgent entreaty, and the statement that it *touches Cæsar nearer, i. e.*, more vitally, Cæsar ignores it. Knowing that Cæsar's life depends on its perusal, Artemidorus makes one final and urgent effort:

Delay not, Cæsar; read it instantly.

But in vain. Cæsar heeds not the warning. Artemidorus takes no further part in the action of the drama.

As the drama approaches the acme of the Climax there is great concentration. One minor character after another vanishes. Flavius, Marullus, Cicero, Portia, Calpurnia, the Soothsayer, Artemidorus, have disappeared. They are but Mechanical Personages, and only indirectly connected with the action. As their dramatic lives cease, the attention of the spectator is more and more concentrated on those characters by whom the Main Action is carried forward.

The Capitol is reached. Popilius, a member of the Senate, but not one of the conspirators, says to Cassius:

I wish your enterprise to-day may thrive.

Cassius, fearful that the plot had been discovered, asks him:

What enterprise, Popilius?

The latter replies:

Fare you well.



Cassius, with wise foresight, had proposed to Brutus

And let us swear our resolution.

Brutus refused:

No, not an oath: *seq.*

As a consequence the existence of the conspiracy became known. Portia suspected it. So did the Soothsayer. Artemidorus knew of it. So did Popilius. Cassius perceived this, and advised that the plot be executed immediately:

Casca, be sudden, for we fear prevention.

Trebonius draws Mark Antony out of the way. The other conspirators, Metellus Cimber, Brutus, Cassius, Cinna, Decius, surround Cæsar,

Desiring [him] that Publius Cimber may  
Have an immediate freedom of repeal.

Cæsar refuses, at first kindly, then firmly, then contemptuously, and at last wrathfully:

Hence! wilt thou lift up Olympus?

Casca had been selected as the first to rear the hand. In response to Cæsar's words he says:

Speak, hands, for me!

and stabs Cæsar. The others do likewise, and last of all Brutus:

. . . when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,  
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,  
Quite vanquish'd him: then burst his mighty heart;  
And, in his mantle muffling up his face,  
Even at the base of Pompey's statua,  
Which all the while ran blood, great Cæsar fell.

Pompey had been his rival. Over Pompey's sons and followers he had, but a short time previously, gained the battle of Munda. It was to rejoice in that triumph, and to make holiday to see Cæsar, that the citizens had gathered in the streets of Rome. Cæsar's triumph, with a description of which the play opens, was short-lived. Now, but a few days later, he lies dead at the foot of Pompey's statue.

The conspiracy having reached its consummation in the death of Cæsar, confusion and suspense ensue. Cinna expresses the sentiments of the conspirators:

Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!

Cassius adds:

Liberty! freedom, and enfranchisement!

Brutus says:

. . . ambition's debt is paid.

Then, like a brave and honorable man, he assumes full responsibility for his share of the deed. He advises Publius to retire, adding:

. . . and let no man abide this deed,  
But we the doers.

Trebonius, who had drawn Mark Antony out of the way, now enters. He informs the others that Antony has

Fled to his house amazed:  
Men, wives and children stare, cry out and run  
As it were doomsday.

Uncertainty now takes the place of confidence. Brutus appeals to the Fates, and is willing to abide by their pleasure. Casca feebly echoes this sentiment. Brutus suggests that they appeal to their countrymen. Cassius supplements this by an appeal to posterity. The conspirators decide to leave the senate-house, and appeal to the Roman people. Just as they are starting, a servant enters. This is the acme of the Climax.<sup>1</sup> Instantly the current of the action changes. Up to this time the conspirators have been successful. Now the reaction begins, a reaction which continues through the remainder of the play, and ends only with the deaths of Brutus and Cassius.

Concurrent with the change in the action of the drama occurs one equally pronounced in the conduct of Antony. He had been the friend of Cæsar, and thrice had offered him the crown. To the superficial observer he appeared weak, trifling, sycophantic, deficient in manliness and honor. Brutus had said he was but a limb of Cæsar, and could do

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, as usual, puts this in the centre of the drama. There are in the play 2477 verses. This one, *Enter a servant*, is verse 1219.

No more than Cæsar's arm  
When Cæsar's head is off.

His life, his death, were of no consequence to the  
success of the conspiracy,

For he is given  
To sports, to wildness and much company.

In fact, Trebonius thought Antony's love for Cæsar so superficial and unreal that he would *laugh at this* (Cæsar's assassination) *hereafter*. And, in truth, there was much reason for this estimate of Antony. Cæsar speaks of him as

Antony, that revels long o' nights.

Such was one aspect of Antony's character. He was this, but he was more. To Cassius, who was *a great observer*, and looked *quite through the deeds of men*, he appeared different. Cassius perceived that notwithstanding a careless and reckless exterior, concealed *under the veil of wildness* Antony was crafty, calculating, daring, dangerous.

We shall find of him  
A shrewd contriver; and, you know, his means,  
If he improve them, may well stretch so far  
As to annoy us all.

In these few lines, which occur in the fore part of the Growth, Shakespeare, by fine foreshadowing, points to Antony as the avenger. Cassius was correct. No sooner was Cæsar murdered than a reaction takes place in Antony. The weight of a great

duty presses on him. His frivolity, his revelling, give way to the utmost seriousness. He dedicates himself to the destruction of the conspirators.

He sends a servant to the conspirators with this message:

If Brutus will vouchsafe that Antony  
May safely come to him, and be resolved  
How Cæsar hath deserved to lie in death,  
Mark Antony shall not love Cæsar dead  
So well as Brutus living; but will follow  
The fortunes and affairs of noble Brutus  
Thorough the hazards of this untrod state  
With all true faith.

This message is judicial, masterful, and forebodes ill to the conspirators. Cassius, keen of insight and wise of foresight, perceives this. When Brutus, mistaken as usual, expressed a confident belief that we shall have Antony *well to friend*, Cassius responds:

I wish we may: but yet have I a mind  
That fears him much; and my misgiving still  
Falls shrewdly to the purpose.

A moment later Antony enters. The action of the drama is now temporarily stayed.

In this play Julius Cæsar, as I have previously stated, is not active, but passive. Forces outside of himself impel the action to a Climax. Other forces, still outside of himself, urge forward the action to the Catastrophe. These two forces, technically the action and the counter-action, meet at the dead body of Cæsar. When the movement of

the drama is renewed, each of these forces changes its direction. The former moves downward and ends in the defeat and destruction of the conspirators; the latter rises to victory and successful retribution.

Antony enters. He disregards Brutus' welcome, and immediately apostrophizes the dead body of Cæsar. He manifests his loyalty to his murdered friend, and his own fearlessness of death. Antony was, as Cassius had described him, a *shrewd contriver*. He perceived instantly that the duty of avenging Cæsar's death devolved upon him. That duty he cheerfully, fearlessly, accepted. At the same time he knew that to have an open rupture with the conspirators at this time would be premature, inopportune. He therefore, for the time being, conceals his feeling toward, his opinion of them, and closes this apostrophe to Cæsar by describing Brutus, Cassius, and the others as:

The choice and master spirits of this age.

Brutus' response to Antony is noble, patriotic, kindly:

Our hearts you see not; they are pitiful;  
And pity to the general wrong of Rome—

. . . . .

Hath done this deed on Cæsar: *seq.*

Cassius, crafty, subtle, attempts to win Antony, not, like Brutus, by appealing to his patriotism, but to his interest:



Your voice shall be as strong as any man's  
In the disposing of new dignities.

Brutus asks him to hold his judgment in abeyance,  
and promises later to

. . . deliver you the cause,  
Why I, that did love Cæsar when I struck him,  
Have thus proceeded.

Antony again, for a moment, conceals his real feeling. He shakes hands with his former friends. Then, turning to Cæsar's corpse, he addresses it:

Pardon me, Julius!

Cassius divines Antony's motive. He again addresses him. Before he can utter more than Antony's name Antony checks him:

Pardon me, Caius Cassius:  
The enemies of Cæsar shall say this:  
Then, in a friend, it is cold modesty.

Cassius, intent on making Antony reveal his determination, responds, testily but firmly:

I blame you not for praising Cæsar so;  
But what compact mean you to have with us?  
Will you be prick'd in number of our friends;  
Or shall we on, and not depend on you?

Antony's reply is non-committal, Machiavellian:

Therefore I took your hands, but was, indeed,  
Sway'd from the point, by looking down on Cæsar.

Friends am I with you all and love you all,  
Upon this hope, that you shall give me reasons  
Why and wherein Cæsar was dangerous.

Brutus, failing to perceive Antony's real feeling and purpose, answers frankly that they would give such reasons

That were you, Antony, the son of Cæsar,  
You should be satisfied.

Having entrapped Brutus, Antony now makes the request

. . . that I may  
Produce his body to the market-place;  
And in the pulpit, as becomes a friend,  
Speak in the order of his funeral.

This request is fraught with the gravest danger to the conspirators. Brutus, conscious of his own purity and nobility of motive, is blind to the peril. He assents to the request. Instantly Cassius protests. He foresees the disastrous consequences of allowing Antony to pronounce a funeral oration. He warns Brutus. Brutus still fails to perceive the danger. He then commits the corpse to Antony's care. Shakespeare thus again points to Antony as the principal avenger:

Mark Antony, here, take you Cæsar's body.  
You shall not in your funeral speech blame us,  
But speak all good you can devise of Cæsar,  
And say you do 't by our permission;  
Else shall you not have any hand at all  
About his funeral.

Antony accepts the charge. He bears the *corse into the market-place*, and never does he allow it to go out of his possession until he gives it to the friendly citizens. They retire with it for the purpose of burning it *in the holy place*.

After Brutus had given Cæsar's body to Antony he and Cassius retire. Antony is left alone. He immediately throws off all disguise, and we see in him the personification of the counter-force, of that force which is to oppose, and finally to crush, the conspirators.

The reader will observe how gradually the poet has depicted this change. First comes, not Antony, but his servant. Later, Antony himself appears. For a time he reveals himself alternately as the friend of Brutus and of Cæsar. Only after the lapse of some time does he manifest himself as the enemy of the conspirators, the friend and avenger of Cæsar.

In a similar manner, *viz.*, by the entrance of a servant, does Shakespeare introduce the other representative of the counter-force, Octavius Cæsar. Octavius was the grandson of the sister of Julius Cæsar. The latter had adopted him as a son, and made him his heir. Shortly before his death Julius Cæsar had written to Octavius, so Antony informs us, to come to Rome. He did not come in person, but sent his servant, who announced

He did receive his letters, and is coming;  
And bid me say to you by word of mouth—

then seeing the wounded body the servant simply exclaims, *O Cæsar*, and weeps. The message from

Octavius is not delivered. We are, however, informed that he is on his way, and *lies to-night within seven leagues of Rome*. Antony orders the servant to

Post back with speed, and tell him what hath chanced:  
Here is a mourning Rome, a dangerous Rome,  
No Rome of safety for Octavius yet.

Antony quickly reconsiders, and directs the servant to wait until he can ascertain

. . . how the people take  
The cruel issue of these bloody men:

When that has been revealed then

. . . thou shalt discourse  
To young Octavius of the state of things.

Antony and the servant of Octavius then bear Cæsar's body to the Forum. Not until some time later does Octavius appear in person.

Thus, in perfect accord with the canon of Art that transitions must be subtle and graduated, has the poet introduced Antony and Octavius, the personifications of the counter-force.

In the fore part of the play the dramatist had to justify the assassination. In the after part he had to vindicate the retribution. One of the ways in which he does the latter is by making Antony speak these apostrophes, so full of sympathy and grief, to the murdered Cæsar:

O mighty Cæsar! dost thou lie so low?  
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure? Fare thee well.

And again, when Antony is left alone with the corpse:

O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,  
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!  
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times.  
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!

In these impassioned words Antony expresses his feelings caused by Cæsar's untimely taking-off. By means of them—and this is their principal dramatic function—the great artist is subtly enkindling similar feelings in the spectators. And this effect is still further enhanced, in fact is developed to the highest degree, by Antony's funeral oration. The rivulet soon becomes a mighty, rushing, irresistible torrent.

Brutus and Cassius, accompanied by a throng of citizens, go to the Forum. Cassius, with those of the citizens who wish to hear him speak, retires. Shakespeare gives us no report of Cassius' oration. The reason is, from the time Brutus joined the conspiracy he became its leader and representative. Hence Shakespeare makes him the mouthpiece of the assassins.

The orations of Brutus and Antony differ in form. One is spoken in prose, the other in blank verse. This difference is not factitious. Rather, it is natural and real. It reflects the characters of the speakers, and the nature of their speeches. Brutus is governed by thought and principle. Hence in his oration he is unimpassioned; he appeals to the reason of the mob. He speaks in prose. Antony

is governed by feeling, impulse. His speech is impassioned. He appeals to the sympathies, emotions of the citizens. His speech is in the form of blank verse. This distinction Shakespeare generally, though not always, makes. In dialogue, in light conversation, in narration where there is absence of feeling, where he desires to lower the dramatic pitch, Shakespeare uses prose. When he expresses intense, passionate emotion he uses blank verse. In the first Scene of this play Flavius and Marullus, who express indignation at the conduct of the citizens, and then later appeal to their sympathy for Pompey, and to their patriotism, speak in blank verse. The citizens, in their matter-of-fact responses, use prose. Scene 2 is in blank verse, with the exception of Casca's description of the offer of a crown to Cæsar by Mark Antony. In narrating that, Casca uses prose.

Brutus addresses the citizens:

Hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear: believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe: censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you may the better judge.

He expresses his love for Cæsar, and also for his country, and states that his motive in murdering Cæsar was purely patriotic. He draws the conclusion:

Who is here so base that would be a bondman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so



rude that would not be a Roman? If any, speak; for him have I offended. Who is here so vile that will not love his country? If any, speak; for him have I offended.

His reasoning in this, as in everything, is faulty. His conclusion, *viz.*, that none but bondmen, slaves, men deficient in patriotism, villains, would be offended by the assassination, is a *non sequitur*, an unwarranted conclusion. But the citizens were won. They inferred that Brutus aspired to Cæsar's place, and they were willing to give it to him.

Live, Brutus! live, live!

Bring him with triumph home unto his house.

Give him a statue with his ancestors.

Let him be Cæsar.

After entreating them to listen to Mark Antony, Brutus departs.

Antony, at the commencement of his oration, manifests the most consummate tact. He first prepares the minds of his hearers to receive his message. Until that has been done he approaches the subject not directly, but indirectly; not immediately, but slowly, gradually. Brutus had left the impression that Cæsar was a tyrant, and justly slain. Antony does not at once attempt to controvert this. He does not come to praise, but to bury Cæsar. Brutus had charged Cæsar with an unpatriotic ambition, with the intention of robbing the Roman citizens of their freedom, of reducing them to slavery. Antony does not directly dispute this. He simply mentions three facts:

He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:

. . . . .  
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept:

. . . . .  
You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
Which he did thrice refuse.

Then he adds, with perfect irony:

I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,  
But here I am to speak what I do know.

Pointing to the corpse he makes the touching statement:

My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar.

During this pause in Antony's oration, Shakespeare reveals to us the change which has taken place in the opinion of the citizens:

Methinks there is much reason in his sayings.  
If thou consider rightly of the matter,  
Cæsar has had great wrong.  
I fear there will a worse come in his place.  
Mark'd ye his words? He would not take the crown;  
Therefore 't is certain he was not ambitious.  
If it be found so, some will dear abide it.  
There's not a nobler man in Rome than Antony.

Antony now proceeds to stir the hearts and minds of the citizens to mutiny and rage by showing Cæsar's will. Curiosity is excited. This is made

more intense by Antony's refusal to read the will, and by the hint that the citizens are Cæsar's heirs. He refers to the conspirators as

. . . the honourable men  
Whose daggers have stabb'd Cæsar.

The change in the citizens now becomes more pronounced. They describe Brutus, Cassius, the others, as *traitors, villains, murderers*. Antony exposes Cæsar's mantle, covered with his blood, with the rents made in it by the conspirators' daggers. Antony had not been present when Cæsar was assassinated. That, however, did not deter him from proceeding to describe in detail the murder:

Look, in this place ran Cassius' dagger through:  
See what a rent the envious Casca made:  
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd.

He then uncovers the corpse:

Look you here,  
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

The effect is such as Antony intended and desired:

We will be revenged.  
Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!  
Let not a traitor live!

Antony still delays the reading of the will, while he disclaims all oratorical ability. The resentment, wrath, of the citizens intensify. At last Antony informs them of the contents of the will:

Here is the will, and under Cæsar's seal.  
To every Roman citizen he gives,  
To every several man, seventy-five drachmas.

Moreover, he hath left you all his walks,  
His private arbours and new-planted orchards,  
On this side Tiber; . . .  
Here was a Cæsar! when comes such another?

The citizens respond:

Never, never. Come, away, away!  
We 'll burn his body in the holy place,  
And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.

They retire with the body. Antony's purpose is accomplished.

Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,  
Take thou what course thou wilt!

The transformation in the sentiments of the mob is complete. The very men for the preservation of whose freedom the conspirators had murdered Cæsar repudiate the deed, and breathe vengeance against the assassins. This is but typical of the change in the current of the action. Brutus and Cassius, who but a few hours before were the idols of the people, the masters of Rome,

Are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome.

Octavius and Lepidus have arrived, and are at Cæsar's house, whither Antony goes to join them.

Fortune is now favorable to the avengers, and, as Antony says,

. . . is merry  
And in this mood will give us anything.

And Fortune does so. She brings victory to Antony and Octavius; to Brutus and Cassius, defeat and death.

#### FALL

#### III., 3-IV., *finis*

If a drama be symmetrical, all following the Climax, or third division, Complements and Balances all preceding it. The Fall, or fourth division, is the counterpart of the Introduction, or first division. The former must Complement and Balance the latter.

This play conforms to this canon of dramatic construction. In it, both in the Fall and in the Introduction, appears the Roman mob. Antony, who in the Introduction had been the friend of Cæsar, and had thrice offered him the crown, appears in the Fall as his avenger. In the Introduction Brutus and Cassius had been the chief organizers of the conspiracy. In the Fall they are engaged in making preparation to withstand the results, so disastrous to them, of that conspiracy. Cæsar's bodily weakness, his physical infirmities, which Shakespeare describes so forcefully in the fore part of the play, are balanced in the Fall and Catastrophe by the might of his *spirit*. His Ghost brings terror to Brutus.

His *spirit, ranging for revenge*, turns the conspirators' swords into their *own proper entrails*. Thus, both in nature and in construction, the Fall or fourth division of this drama is the counterpart of the Introduction or first division. The former, in both particulars, Complements and Balances the latter.

The citizens, variously described as *the tag-rag people, the rabblement, the common herd, a rabble of citizens, their worshippers*, constitute in this play the Environing Action. They take no direct part in the movement of the play, yet they exert a subtle, powerful, continuous influence both on the action and on the counter-action. They aid indirectly in bringing the action to a Climax; also in starting the counter-action towards the Catastrophe. When they first appear it is to *make holiday, to see Cæsar and to rejoice in his triumph*. Later, as Cæsar passes in procession, they *shout*. Brutus on hearing this says:

What means this shouting? I do fear, the people  
Choose Cæsar for their king.

Not long after Brutus hears

Another general shout!

He says:

I do believe that these applauses are  
For some new honours that are heap'd on Cæsar.

When Antony offered the crown for the third time to Cæsar,



The rabblement hooted and clapped their chapped hands and threw up their sweaty night-caps and uttered such a deal of stinking breath because Cæsar refused the crown that it had almost choked Cæsar; for he swooned and fell down at it.

Cassius recognized the invisible but potent influence of the mob when he determined to throw in at Brutus' windows,

As if they came from several citizens,  
Writings all tending to the great opinion  
That Rome holds of his name.

The infatuation and idolatry of the Roman mob for Cæsar was, in Cassius' opinion, the source of the danger that threatened the Republic.

And why should Cæsar be a tyrant then?  
Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf,  
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:  
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.

The influence of the mob, and the advisability of gaining its support for the conspiracy, is recognized by Brutus. He objects to killing Antony or mangling Cæsar:

This shall make  
Our purpose necessary and not envious:  
Which so appearing to the common eyes,  
We shall be call'd purgers, not murderers.

We hear no more of the mob until after Cæsar has been assassinated. No sooner has that deed been consummated than the conspirators begin to con-

sider its effect on the people. In order that that effect may not be injurious to them personally, or prejudicial to their cause, they take means to win the support of the people. Cinna says:

Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead!  
Run hence, proclaim, cry it about the streets.

Cassius adds:

Some to the common pulpits, and cry out  
"Liberty, freedom, and enfranchisement."

Brutus commands:

Stoop, Romans, stoop,  
And let us bathe our hands in Cæsar's blood  
Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords:  
Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,  
And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads,  
Let 's all cry, "Peace, freedom and liberty!"

Antony likewise is aware of the potent influence of the mob, and he also attempts to gain its support. With great adroitness he makes request to Brutus

. . . that I may  
Produce his body to the market-place;  
And in the pulpit, as becomes a friend,  
Speak in the order of his funeral.

Cassius immediately recognizes the danger and protests. Cassius' warning is unheeded. The citizens now appear in the Forum, demanding

We will be satisfied; let us be satisfied.

Brutus states to them that

. . . public reasons shall be rendered  
Of Cæsar's death.

He proceeds to address them, giving reasons to justify the assassination. These are so satisfactory that the citizens approve the deed. Brutus then retires. Antony, who has come to the Forum with Cæsar's dead body, now begins to speak. He addresses an audience which is, at first, unfriendly. The citizens have been completely won over by Brutus. One says: *This Cæsar was a tyrant.* Another responds:

. . . Nay, that 's certain:  
We are blest that Rome is rid of him.

Antony, however, by his eloquence causes a change, at first gradual, but eventually radical, in the sentiments of the mob. It reaches the determination to

burn [Cæsar's] body in the holy place,  
And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.

It departs with the body breathing threatenings and slaughter against the conspirators. In so doing it meets Cinna the poet. It mistakes him for Cinna the conspirator, and immediately threatens to tear him to pieces. He protests he is not Cinna the conspirator, but Cinna the poet. Like all mobs, this one is not swayed by reason, but by emotion.

It is no matter, his name 's Cinna; pluck but his name out of his heart, and turn him going.

With this threat, which it does not execute, it makes its final exit from the play. Shortly after this the scene of the action is removed from Rome, and the mob, therefore, does not again appear. Thus at the beginning of the Fall, as at the beginning of the Introduction, the mob appears and indirectly influences the movement of the drama. And yet it has taken no direct part in that movement. During the progress of the action it appears and disappears, all the while, whether present or absent, exerting a subtle and continuous influence on that action. Its devotion to Cæsar is, in the opinion of the conspirators, one cause of his dangerous ambition. The effect of that devotion on the conspirators is to awaken their fears for the Republic. While plotting the murder of Cæsar the conspirators considered the effect of the deed on the mob. After Cæsar's murder, they appealed to the same mob, begging its approval. The avengers, in the person of Antony, likewise appealed to the people, urging them to condemn and to avenge the deed. The mob is taken into consideration both by the conspirators and the avengers. Its influence upon both is silent, puissant, and yet it takes no direct part in the action of the drama. Like the Witches in *Macbeth*, the Argosies in the *Merchant of Venice*, it is outside of the action of the drama, and yet exerts on that action an influence which aids in bringing it first to a Climax, and later in carrying it forward to the Catastrophe. Such is the function of the Environing Action in a drama; and that function, in this play, is performed by the mob.

After Antony had spoken for some time at Cæsar's funeral and partially won the sympathies of the mob for Cæsar, one of the citizens said:

I fear there will a worse come in his place.

The second Scene of the Fall (IV., 1) presents to us those who did come in Cæsar's place, *viz.*, Antony, Octavius, Lepidus. As they reveal their characters in this Scene we perceive that the citizen's misgiving is realized. Lepidus was but *a slight unmeritable man*. Antony compares him to an *ass*. He was

A barren-spirited fellow; one that feeds  
On objects, arts and imitations,  
Which, out of use and staled by other men,  
Begin his fashion.

By the force of circumstances he was thrust into a position which he was unable to fill. He is a perfect illustration of what Shakespeare elsewhere says: *To be called into a huge sphere, and not to be seen to move in 't, are the holes where eyes should be, which pitifully disaster the cheeks.*<sup>1</sup> After having spoken but four verses he is sent to *fetch Cæsar's will*. He does not return. He has taken no part in the action of the drama. His dramatic function is that of a Character-Foil. The difference between him, on the one hand, and Antony and Octavius, on the other, is not great enough to cause a pronounced contrast. He is much like them. *His corporal motion* is governed by *Antony's spirit*. And yet between

<sup>1</sup> *Antony and Cleopatra*, II., 7, 15, *seq.*

them there is difference enough to bring into more vivid light the characters of Antony and Octavius.

Antony while strong is unscrupulous. His first effort is to prevent the execution of Cæsar's will:

. . . we shall determine  
How to cut off some charge in legacies.

Octavius alone seems to possess some of the ancient Roman honor, to be worthy of his name. Surely *a worse has come in Cæsar's place*.

Lepidus is the counterpart of Casca. In the conspiracy Casca had been, after Brutus and Cassius, the most conspicuous character. Yet he was but the tool of Brutus and Cassius. After the assassination he retires, and does not again appear. Lepidus likewise, as I have said, was of minor importance. After he had departed to fetch Cæsar's will his dramatic life ends. This leaves only Antony and Octavius who are the representatives of the counter-action, and who are the counterparts of Brutus and Cassius. These four men dominate the after part of the play.

After the Climax, Trebonius, Ligarius, Decius Brutus, Metellus Cimber, Cinna, all disappear from the drama. Some few new characters are introduced. It is a canon of dramatic construction that no new character of great importance should be introduced after the Climax. Those who first appear in the after part of this play are either friends or servants to Brutus and Cassius. Their influence on the action is slight.

At the close of this Scene (IV., 1), the only one



in the Fall in which Antony and Octavius appear, they consult as to plans for crushing Brutus and Cassius. Antony says:

And now, Octavius,  
Listen great things:—Brutus and Cassius  
Are levying powers: we must straight make head: *seq.*

Octavius responds:

Let us do so: for we are at the stake,  
And bay'd about with many enemies;  
And some that smile have in their hearts, I fear,  
Millions of mischiefs.

The attention of the spectator is thus directed to the impending Catastrophe. He is prepared for the reaction, which from the Climax gradually increases in force until it becomes ascendent.

The scene, as well as the direction, of the action is now changed. At the close of Antony's oration Brutus and Cassius had fled from Rome. They next appear in camp near Sardis. Before they meet we are informed (IV., 2) of a disagreement between them. Pindarus, a servant of Cassius, brings a letter from him to Brutus. After reading it Brutus says to Pindarus:

Your master, Pindarus,  
In his own change, or by ill officers,  
Hath given me some worthy cause to wish  
Things done, undone: but, if he be at hand,  
I shall be satisfied.

A moment later Cassius arrives. He immediately and frankly upbraids Brutus:

Most noble brother, you have done me wrong.

Brutus wisely checks Cassius :

Cassius, be content;  
Speak your griefs softly: I do know you well.  
Before the eyes of both our armies here,  
Which should perceive nothing but love from us,  
Let us not wrangle : bid them move away;  
Then in my tent, Cassius, enlarge your griefs,  
And I will give you audience.

The armies move *off a little from this ground*.  
Brutus and Cassius retire to the former's tent,  
where is held that famous discussion, to a description of which the Fall is devoted.

A great Scene, such as this Tent Scene, like the drama of which it forms a portion, consists of five parts. First comes the introduction, in which we are informed of a previous occurrence, which is the cause of the disagreement. Cassius said to Brutus :

That you have wrong'd me doth appear in this :  
You have condemn'd and noted Lucius Pella  
For taking bribes here of the Sardians ;  
Wherein my letters, praying on his side,  
Because I knew the man, were slighted off.

The quarrel grows by Brutus frankly informing Cassius :

. . . you yourself  
Are much condemn'd to have an itching palm ;  
To sell and mart your offices for gold  
To undeservers.

Further that

The name of Cassius honours this corruption,  
And chastisement doth therefore hide his head.

Then reverting to the past, Brutus said :

Remember March, the ides of March remember :

And remember also the deed that on that day had  
been perpetrated. A man,

the foremost man of all this world,

great Julius, had been slain. What motive had impelled the murderers ? Justice.

In order that a drama possess grandeur and dignity, it is necessary that the motive of the action be worthy. If the motive of Cæsar's murderers had been coarse brutality or petty malice, the deed would have been unjustifiable, the drama would have lacked grandeur. Hence Shakespeare over and over again attributes noble motives to the conspirators. He does so here once more. He has in this, however, an ulterior motive, *viz.*, by contrast to show the unworthiness of Cassius' conduct :

Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake ?  
What villain touch'd his body, that did stab,  
And not for justice ? What, shall one of us,  
That struck the foremost man of all this world  
But for supporting robbers, shall we now  
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,  
And sell the mighty space of our large honours

For so much trash as may be grasped thus ?  
I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,  
Than such a Roman.

Cassius' anger becomes more and more aroused.

Brutus, bay not me ;  
I 'll not endure it : you forget yourself,  
To hedge me in ; I am a soldier, I,  
Older in practice, abler than yourself  
To make conditions.

Brutus denies this. Cassius, however, is right. Intense emotion on the part of both these men disturbs the intellectual balance. They descend to personalities.

*Cas.* Urge me no more, I shall forget myself ;  
Have mind upon your health, tempt me no further.

*Bru.* Away, slight man ! *seq.*

Reason again resumes sway.

*Bru.* You say you are a better soldier :  
Let it appear so ; make your vaunting true,  
And it shall please me well : for mine own part,  
I shall be glad to learn of noble men.

*Cas.* You wrong me every way ; you wrong me,  
Brutus ;  
I said, an elder soldier, not a better :  
Did I say ' better ' ?

Cassius refers to Cæsar. Though dead, Cæsar was mighty yet. His *spirit, ranging for revenge*, overshadowed the conspirators. Cassius said :

When Cæsar lived, he durst not thus have moved me.

*Bru.* Peace, peace ! you durst not so have tempted him.

*Cas.* I durst not !

*Bru.* No.

*Cas.* What, durst not tempt him !

*Bru.* For your life you durst not.

The discussion reaches a climax. Feeling becomes intense. Anger reaches the highest development. Cassius threatens Brutus :

Do not presume too much upon my love ;  
I may do that I shall be sorry for.

*Bru.* You have done that you should be sorry for.  
There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats,  
For I am arm'd so strong in honesty  
That they pass by me as the idle wind,  
Which I respect not : *seq.*

Anger gives way to grief, which is followed later by reconciliation.

*Cas.* O, I could weep  
My spirit from mine eyes ! There is my dagger,  
And here my naked breast ; within, a heart  
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold :  
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth ;  
I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart :

*Bru.* Sheathe your dagger :  
Be angry when you will, it shall have scope ;  
Do what you will, dishonour shall be humour.

The climax of this discussion has now been passed. From this time it changes its direction.

It enters upon another phase, answering to the Fall in a drama. Like the latter, it is episodic. The discussion temporarily ceases. It is interrupted by the entrance of a poet, who reproaches Brutus and Cassius for their unseemly conduct.

*Poet.* For shame, you generals ! What do you mean ? Love, and be friends, as two such men should be.

Lucilius and Titinius also enter. They receive orders from Brutus and Cassius as to the lodgment of their troops. Lucius enters, and immediately retires to bring a bowl of wine. Shakespeare then informs us of the death of Portia. In the most gentle and soothing manner, Cassius said to Brutus :

I did not think you could have been so angry.

Brutus is touched. He unbosoms himself :

O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.

*Cas.* Of your philosophy you make no use,  
If you give place to accidental evils.

*Bru.* No man bears sorrow better. Portia is dead.

*Cas.* Ha ! Portia !

*Bru.* She is dead.

*Cas.* How 'scaped I killing when I cross'd you so ?  
O insupportable and to lching loss !  
Upon what sickness ?

*Bru.* Impatient of my absence,  
And grief that young Octavius with Mark Antony  
Have made themselves so strong :—for with her death  
That tidings came ;—with this she fell distract,  
And, her attendants absent, swallow'd fire.



*Cas.* And died so?

*Bru.*

Even so.

*Cas.*

O ye immortal gods!

Lucius enters with the wine. In a bowl of that Brutus and Cassius bury all unkindness. Titinius and Messala enter. We are informed that the avengers have begun their work. By proscription and bills of outlawry, Octavius, Antony, and Lepidus have put to death a number of Senators; seventy, according to Brutus' letters, one hundred according to Messala's, amongst them being Cicero. Further, that the avengers are marching towards Philippi. Reference is once more made to Portia's death, and this division of the Scene ends.

The fifth and last division of the Scene is prospective. It is devoted wholly to preparation for the impending Catastrophe. Brutus begins by saying:

Well, to our work alive. What do you think  
Of marching to Philippi presently?

Cassius dissents:

'Tis better that the enemy seek us : *seq.*

Cassius yields. Thus another has been added to the many errors of the conspirators.

When valour preys on reason,  
It eats the sword it fights with.\*

Having reached this decision, Cassius retires. Before he did so Brutus, bidding him farewell, said:

Noble, noble Cassius,  
Good night, and good repose.

\* Antony and Cleopatra, III., 13, 199, 200.

To which Cassius responded :

O my dear brother !

This was an ill beginning of the night :

Never come such division 'tween our souls !

Let it not, Brutus.

Thus, this Scene, which, when viewed either by itself alone, or as a component part of the play, is a masterpiece of dramatic construction, is constructed in the shape of an arch. It begins in a disagreement, which gradually develops into a passionate animosity, and as gradually subsides into reconciliation, peace, and loving friendship, the ultimate result of all which is to propel the action of the drama towards the Catastrophe. In it—and this is its principal dramatic function—Shakespeare once more reveals to us, and in the most vivid manner, the characters of Brutus and Cassius. We see in them a change. Previous to the assassination, they were noble in their sentiments, aggressive in their conduct. They now have become irritable, petulant, despondent. Cassius

could weep [his] spirit from his eyes.

He bares his breast, offers his dagger to Brutus, and entreats him to

Strike, as thou did'st at Cæsar.

Brutus, likewise, is oppressed with sorrow :

O, Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.

This change in these men is but a concomitant of the change in the direction of the action of the

drama. It foreshadows approaching doom. It is caused by that Nemesis which is rapidly overtaking them.

The remainder of the Fall is devoted by Shakespeare to two Episodes—that of Lucius and that of Cæsar's ghost.

The first of these Episodes recalls—and that is Shakespeare's purpose in introducing it—the night which immediately preceded the murder of Cæsar. On that occasion, as now, Lucius, a sleeping boy, formed a contrast to the disturbed and distressed condition of his master. At the close of the Fall, like a recurring sound in a musical composition, Shakespeare repeats this motive. Again, the plans of the conspirators have been arranged; again it is night, a night preceding violence and death. Brutus asks Lucius:

Where is thy instrument ?

What, thou speak'st drowsily ?

Poor knave, I blame thee not ; thou art o'erwatch'd.

A little later Brutus inquires :

Canst thou hold up thy heavy eyes awhile,  
And touch thy instrument a strain or two ?

The boy answers in the affirmative. Brutus responds :

It was well done ; and thou shalt sleep again ;  
I will not hold thee long : if I do live,  
I will be good to thee. [*Music, and a song.*]

By this Episode occurring on the night preceding the deaths of Brutus and Cassius, the dramatist re-

calls that other night, which preceded the death of Cæsar, at the hands of these very men. He also, by this same Episode, gives us a glimpse of the gentler side of Brutus' nature. On the night after the exciting quarrel with Cassius, surrounded by his soldiers, and with the expectation of a bloody, probably fatal, conflict on the next day, he devotes some time to hearing music and to reading. Thus does Shakespeare make the fate of Brutus more pathetic.

The Episode of Lucius was reminiscent. That of Cæsar's ghost is prescient. It is the final act of the dramatist to prepare the minds of the spectators for the impending Catastrophe.

The influence of the spirit-world on living men was very real and potent amongst the Romans in Cæsar's day, and also in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Ghosts of murdered men were believed to appear to the murderers. It was a favorite device of Shakespeare's to make use of ghost-like apparitions. On the night preceding the battle of Bosworth Field, the ghosts of Prince Edward, of Henry VI., of Clarence, of Rivers, Grey, Vaughan, Hastings, the Young Princes, Queen Anne, Buckingham, all appear to Richard III.

. . . and every one did threat  
To-morrow's vengeance on the head of Richard.

In the stillness of the night, while all but Brutus are asleep, Cæsar's ghost appears to Brutus in his tent:

Speak to me what thou art.

*Ghost.* Thy evil spirit, Brutus.

*Bru.* Why comest thou ?

*Ghost.* To tell thee, thou shalt see me at Philippi.

*Bru.* Well ; then I shall see thee again ?

*Ghost.* Ay, at Philippi.

*Bru.* Why, I will see thee at Philippi, then.

[*Exit Ghost.*]

Now I have taken heart thou vanishest :

Ill spirit, I would hold more talk with thee.

Equally guilty with Brutus in the murder of Cæsar was Cassius. In fact, Cassius was the originator of the conspiracy. It was owing to his entreaty that Brutus joined it. And yet Cæsar's ghost appeared not to Cassius, but only to Brutus. Why ? Between Brutus and Cæsar there had existed the truest friendship, the sincerest affection. So real, indeed, was this fact that Cassius was astonished that Brutus could be tempted to prove unfaithful to Cæsar. Brutus, however, did yield, and thus was more guilty than any other of the conspirators. His ingratitude, his disloyalty, more than any of the daggers, killed Cæsar. Hence it was but justice, real, as well as poetic, that Cæsar's ghost should appear to Brutus, and only to him.

Sleeping in Brutus' tent are Lucius, the boy ; Varro and Claudius, servants to Brutus. The ghost exerts on them also a disturbing influence. The boy, thinking he is still at his instrument, awakens suddenly. He experiences a feeling of discord.

The strings, my lord, are false.

So was the judgment of the conspirators. As nothing but discord results from false strings in a

musical instrument, so from the mistaken judgment and conduct of the conspirators there resulted naught but failure and death. Varro and Claudius cry out in their sleep. Brutus orders Varro and Claudius:

Go and commend me to my brother Cassius :  
Bid him set on his powers betimes before,  
And we will follow.

The battle which is fought the next day forms the subject of the Catastrophe. Every preparation having been made for that, the Fall ends.

## CATASTROPHE

## V

Early in the morning of the day on which the battle of Philippi was fought, Brutus said to Cassius:

But this same day  
Must end that work the ides of March begun.

The Catastrophe of a drama is the natural outcome of all the preceding parts of the play. In *Julius Cæsar* the Catastrophe is devoted to a representation of the battle of Philippi and its results. That battle was the remote but direct consequence of the *work the ides of March begun* ; viz., the assassination of Cæsar. And that in turn was the outgrowth of the conspiracy. Thus we perceive this drama to be organic. Each part is in vital union with every other part, and all together form an organic whole.



Against the judgment of Cassius, Brutus and he decided to march to Philippi. They thus did exactly what Antony and Octavius hoped they would do. The Catastrophe begins by recounting this fact. Octavius said :

Now, Antony, our hopes are answered : *seq.*

So mistaken from the standpoint of generalship was this decision of Brutus and Cassius that Antony attributes it to bravado.

Tut, I am in their bosoms, and I know  
Wherefore they do it : they could be content  
To visit other places ; and come down  
With fearful bravery, thinking by this face  
To fasten in our thoughts that they have courage ;  
But 'tis not so.

Antony and Octavius arrange their plan of battle, Octavius taking the right, Antony the left. The conspirators and their army now appear on the battle-field.

Brutus advances and suggests a conference.

Words before blows : is it so, countrymen ?

Brutus' intention was, if possible, to effect a reconciliation. His advances, however, were ruthlessly rejected. Antony charges him with the murder of Cæsar :

Witness the hole you made in Cæsar's heart,  
Crying, " Long live ! hail, Cæsar ! "

and again, addressing Cassius as well as Brutus :

Villains, you did not so, when your vile daggers  
Hack'd one another in the sides of Cæsar : *seq.*

Cassius now recalls to Brutus his advice regarding  
Antony :

I think it is not meet,  
Mark Antony, so well beloved of Cæsar,  
Should outlive Cæsar :

Let Antony and Cæsar fall together.

Brutus, with mistaken kindness, had rejected this  
proposition. Antony was allowed to live. Cassius  
now says to Brutus :

Now, Brutus, thank yourself :  
This tongue had not offended so to-day,  
If Cassius might have ruled.

To Antony's words Octavius adds his own declaration of war against the conspirators :

Look ;  
I draw a sword against conspirators ; *seq.*

Antony, Octavius, and their army, now retire.  
The next time they appear it is to fight.

Before they do so, however, Shakespeare recounts  
two conversations, one between Cassius and Messala, the other between Cassius and Brutus. In  
both of these conversations the result of that conflict, so disastrous to the conspirators, is foreshadowed.

In the first, Cassius calls Messala to witness that  
he opposed Brutus' plan of marching to Philippi.

and staking fortune on the result of one battle. Pompey had made that mistake at Pharsalia. It had resulted in his ruin. Cassius then refers to his former belief in Epicurus.<sup>1</sup> Epicurus rejected Fatalism, the doctrine of the Stoics. He believed that in human conduct there is no absolutely controlling necessity. Cassius now changes his mind. He accepts a belief in Fatalism. Two mighty eagles which had accompanied the army to Philippi had flown away, and in their places had come ravens, crows, kites. The eagle had been selected as the standard of the Roman army. It was considered a bird of good omen. The Soothsayer in *Cymbeline* said:

I saw Jove's bird, the Roman eagle, wing'd  
 From the spongy south to this part of the west,  
 There vanish'd in the sunbeams : which portends—  
 Unless my sins abuse my divination—  
 Success to the Roman host.

Ravens, crows, and kites were birds of evil omen.  
 To Cassius

. . . their shadows seem  
 A canopy most fatal, under which  
 Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost.

He, however, resolves

To meet all perils very constantly.

<sup>1</sup> "The Epicurean condensed his gospel into four maxims : 'God is not to be feared ; death cannot be felt ; the Good can be won ; all that we dread can be borne and conquered.'"—Murray, *Ancient Greek Literature*, p. 373.

Brutus is to die by suicide. In order to foreshadow that, and thereby increase the suspense of the spectator, Cassius now turns to Brutus, and asks him, in case we lose this battle,

What are you then determined to do?

At first Brutus rejects the notion of suicide. He will bear misfortune, if that comes. When Cassius inquires if he is willing to be led in triumph through the streets of Rome, Brutus reverses this decision:

No, Cassius, no : think not, thou noble Roman,  
That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome ;  
He bears too great a mind.

These two men now bid each other farewell. They never again meet.

The remainder of the Catastrophe is devoted to the representation of the battle of Philippi, its varying fortunes, its result.

The right wing of the conspirators' army was commanded by Brutus. Opposed to him was Octavius. On the left was Cassius, who was confronted by Antony. Brutus ordered his force to charge. It was victorious, and drove back Octavius. The result was that one side of Cassius' force was left unguarded. Antony took advantage of this, and surrounded Cassius' army. Cassius retreats some distance, and takes refuge on the top of a hill. He sends Titinius to see

Whether yond troops are friend or enemy.

Believing that Titinius is taken prisoner, Cassius

immediately loses heart. He resolves on self-destruction. When Pindarus comes down, Cassius says:

Come hither, sirrah :  
 In Parthia did I take thee prisoner ;  
 And then I swore thee, saving of thy life,  
 That whatsoever I did bid thee do,  
 Thou shouldst attempt it. Come now, keep thine oath ;  
 Now be a freeman : and with this good sword,  
 That ran through Cæsar's bowels, search this bosom.

Messala had informed Brutus of the death of Cassius. Brutus then prepares to renew the conflict. His force assaults the enemy. Cato is overpowered and falls. Then Lucilius is attacked. He assumes Brutus' name. Supposing him to be Brutus the soldier does not kill him, but takes him prisoner. Antony now arrives. He recognizes Lucilius, and orders that he be treated kindly. In another part of the field are Brutus, Dardanius, Clitus, Strato, and Volumnius. Brutus recognizes the fact that defeat is inevitable. He is full of grief. He decides to commit suicide. To Clitus he said:

. . . slaying is the word ;  
 It is a deed in fashion,

And to Volumnius:

The ghost of Cæsar hath appear'd to me  
 Two several times by night ; at Sardis once,  
 And, this last night, here in Philippi fields :  
 I know my hour is come.

And again:

Our enemies have beat us to the pit :  
It is more worthy to leap in ourselves,  
Than tarry till they push us.

He proposes to Clitus, then to Dardanius, afterward to Volumnius, to kill him. The danger increases. The avengers press them so closely it becomes necessary to fly. Clitus, Dardanius, and Volumnius do so. Brutus and Strato alone remain. To the latter Brutus said:

Hold then my sword, and turn away thy face,  
While I do run upon it. Wilt thou, Strato ?  
Farewell, good Strato.—Cæsar, now be still :  
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.

And then, running on his sword, Brutus dies. Lucilius had told Antony.

. . . that no enemy  
Shall ever take alive the noble Brutus :  
The gods defend him from so great a shame!  
When you do find him, or alive or dead,  
He will be found like Brutus, like himself.

And that prediction was fulfilled. All the conspirators save Brutus and Cassius had fled. Brutus and Cassius being dead, Cæsar's death had been avenged. Magnanimity toward Brutus now fills the breasts of Antony and Octavius. The former pays the highest tribute to Brutus' character. The latter arranges for *rites of burial* such as shall be worthy of him.

The Catastrophe of this play is not so much tragic



as pathetic. While the spectator feels that the deaths of Brutus and Cassius are the legitimate result of the assassination of Cæsar, still these deaths, particularly that of Brutus, evoke pity. In this respect this Catastrophe is like that of *Romeo and Juliet*, and unlike those of *Richard III.* and *Macbeth*. The reason of this is that Brutus' conduct was the result, not of a murderous ambition, but of a mistaken sense of duty. His motive was the purest patriotism. So intense, so genuine, was his patriotism that it would lead Brutus to sacrifice to the welfare of the Republic not only Cæsar, but also himself. Antony believed this, and so stated in his eulogy of Brutus. While Brutus' motive was noble, still it was mistaken. His conduct, from the first to the last deed, was a series of errors. His decision to join the conspiracy was the result of the most illogical reasoning. He sacrifices his best friend for fear that that friend, in the future, may destroy the liberties of the Roman people. This, the primary mistake, is followed by a series of others; *viz.*, refusal to allow the conspirators to swear their resolution; neglect to invite Cicero to join the conspiracy; neglect to kill Antony. These negative errors are followed by positive ones as ruinous; *viz.*, allowing Antony to speak at Cæsar's funeral; quarrelling with Cassius; marching to Philippi to meet Antony and Octavius, and staking everything on that battle; giving too early the word to assault Octavius. To all these must be added Cassius' mistake in supposing Titinius taken prisoner, and, as a result, his own suicide. The conspiracy failed. Cassius and

Brutus meet their deaths, not as the result of intentional wrong-doing, but because of a misguided and erroneous judgment,—of error. As Messala expresses it:

O hateful error, melancholy's child,  
Why dost thou show to the apt thoughts of men  
The things that are not? O error, soon conceived,  
Thou never comest unto a happy birth,  
But kill'st the mother that engender'd thee.

Hence in the Catastrophe of this play there is an utter absence of remorse. As a consequence it is not so much tragic as pathetic. It is the presence of remorse in the last experiences of Richard III., and of Lord and Lady Macbeth, which constitutes their keenest anguish, and which makes the Catastrophes of the dramas portraying their experiences so profoundly tragic. Both Richard III. and the Macbeths deliberately dedicated themselves to murder. As a consequence they suffered the intensest agony of remorse. Unlike both of them in this respect, but like that of *Julius Cæsar*, is the Catastrophe of *Romeo and Juliet*. In the cases both of Romeo and of Juliet their deaths were the result, not of any wrong-doing, but of mistakes. Juliet had been married to Romeo. As she told Friar Laurence:

God join'd my heart and Romeo's, thou our hands.

Ignorant of this fact, her father had determined that she should marry the County Paris. In order to

prevent that, and, as she expressed it, that she might

live an unstained wife to my sweet love,

she seeks Friar Laurence. It is Tuesday. Thursday, by her father's command, she is to be married to the County Paris. The Friar gives her a sleeping potion, the effect of which would be to cause a sleep resembling death, and lasting two-and-forty hours.

Now, when the bridegroom in the morning comes  
To rouse thee from thy bed, there art thou dead :  
Then, as the manner of our country is,  
In thy best robes uncover'd on the bier  
Thou shalt be borne to that same ancient vault  
Where all the kindred of the Capulets lie.  
In the mean time, against thou shalt awake,  
Shall Romeo by my letters know our drift,  
And hither shall he come : and he and I  
Will watch thy waking, and that very night  
Shall Romeo bear thee hence to Mantua.  
And this shall free thee from this present shame.

The plan miscarried. Friar John, who bore the letter to Romeo, was detained in Mantua. In the meantime Romeo hears of Juliet's supposed death. Balthasar informs him

Her body sleeps in Capel's monument,  
And her immortal part with angels lives.

Romeo immediately returns to Verona; goes to the tomb; finds Juliet there, apparently dead. Be-

lieving her really dead he takes poison, and, kissing her, dies. A little later, Juliet awakens. She finds Romeo's dead body lying beside her. She seizes his dagger, and stabs herself fatally. Both these deaths are the result of mistakes. They are *mis-adventured piteous*. Hence in the Catastrophe there is an absence of remorse. The fates of Romeo and of Juliet are not so much tragic as pathetic.

Such, also, is the nature of the Catastrophe of this play. Its dominant characteristic is pathos. Poetic Justice demanded that Cæsar's death should be avenged. And so it was. Portia, Cassius, Brutus, all commit suicide. In these deaths all unkindness is buried. (Brutus erred not through evil intent but mistaken judgment.) This fact was perceived by all. Of the rectitude of his purposes he himself was fully cognizant. As his death approached none but the kindest feelings toward his fellow-men filled his breast.

Countrymen,  
My heart doth joy that yet in all my life  
I found no man but he was true to me.

His reputation as a patriot he felt was secure.

I shall have glory by this losing day  
More than Octavius and Mark Antony  
By this vile conquest shall attain unto.

Not once does he express the least regret for his part in Cæsar's death. Rather he gloried in it, and felt with Cassius that, so often as

this our lofty scene [shall] be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown !

. . . . .  
So often shall the knot of us be call'd  
The men that gave their country liberty.

Borne down by forces beyond his control, he accepted his fate with resignation, nay, more, with cheerfulness. He was not practical. As a conspirator, a soldier, he was a failure. He was an idealist. To his high ideals he was ever true. As a consequence, though unsuccessful, he died commanding the respect and admiration both of his friends and foes. After his death Antony and Octavius gave expression to this in their eulogies with which the play ends:

*Antony.* This was the noblest Roman of them all :  
All the conspirators save only he  
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar ;  
He only, in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world " This was a man ! "

*Octavius.* According to his virtue let us use him,  
With all respect and rites of burial.  
Within my tent his bones to-night shall lie,  
Most like a soldier, ordered honourably.

## CHAPTER VI

### TWELFTH NIGHT

THE note that vibrates through this play is struck in the opening verse:

If music be the food of love, play on.

The dramatic motive, the exciting force of this drama, is love. As the clouds are driven by the wind, the waves of the sea by the hurricane, so the characters in *Twelfth Night* are dominated and propelled by the master-passion. The Duke is in love with Olivia. Viola (Cesario) falls in love with the Duke. When Olivia first sees Cesario she loses her heart. These are the characters in the Main Action.

It is a canon of art that every minor, every special effect in a work of art reflects and emphasizes the general effect. When applied to a drama this means that the characters in the Sub-Actions reflect, more or less, those by whom the Main Action is carried forward. They are controlled, not, however, to the same degree, by similar thoughts and emotions.

In this play the actors in the Sub-Actions, like those in the Main Action, are in love. Malvolio is a suitor for Olivia's hand. So is Sir Andrew Aguecheek. Sir Toby's admiration for Maria's wit



develops into a feeling of affection; while she, if we are to believe Sir Toby, *adores him*.

Even some of the men are in love with each other. Antonio gives to Sebastian his *love, without retention or restraint*. Although he goes to the Duke Orsino's court at the risk of his life, in order to be with Sebastian, he determines to assume that risk.

But, come what may, I do adore thee so,  
That danger shall seem sport, and I will go.

Antonio's love is reciprocated by Sebastian. After his fruitless search for Antonio, when Sebastian met him, he said:

Antonio, O my dear Antonio!  
How have the hours rack'd and tortured me,  
Since I have lost thee!

In fact, in this play, as the Clown sings:

Journeys end in lovers meeting.

This, then, being a love comedy, Shakespeare in the opening verse touches the emotional chord that vibrates through it.

He still further manifests his perfect technique by his reference in that verse to music:

If music be the food of love; *seq.*

Of all the arts music pre-eminently expresses and interprets human emotion. It is the universal language of the soul. It appeals primarily not to the

intellect but to the heart; it gives expression not so much to thought, perception, memory, as to feeling. The whole gamut of the emotions is struck by it.<sup>1</sup> It expresses joy, sorrow, triumph. It soothes the disturbed spirit; promotes serenity, tranquillity.

Music that gentler on the spirit lies,  
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes.<sup>2</sup>

The music of Ariel's song, says Ferdinand,

. . . crept by me upon the waters,  
Allaying both their fury and my passion  
With its sweet air.

But, above all, it expresses the master-passion. Valentine asks:

Why, how know you that I am in love?

Speed replies:

Marry, by these special marks : first, you have learned  
. . . to relish a love-song, like a robin-redbreast.

Viola says music

. . . gives a very echo to the seat  
Where Love is throned.

According to Biron, Dan Cupid is the

Regent of love-rhymes.

As love is the dramatic motive, the exciting force of this play, and as music, more perfectly than any

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Knight, *The Philosophy of the Beautiful*, Part II., p. 129, *seq.* Raymond, *Art in Theory*, p. 207, *seq.*

<sup>2</sup> Tennyson, *The Lotos-Eaters*.

other art, expresses love, Shakespeare has pervaded the play with a lyrical element. It is filled with music, both instrumental and vocal, the burden of which is:

What is love? 't is not hereafter;  
 Present mirth hath present laughter;  
 What 's to come is still unsure:  
 In delay there lies no plenty;  
 Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty,  
 Youth 's a stuff will not endure.

The play opens with the Duke's request for music. It closes with the Clown's song.

Love may be either tragic or comic. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare portrays the former; in this play it is the comic side of love, its oddities, freaks, foibles, which Shakespeare portrays. In harmony with this the scene of action is a breezy, boisterous, disorderly, jolly, world. Gay and hot spirits get into mischief, and play mad pranks. The life which the play portrays is sensuous, animated, hilarious.

✓ It was written to be played the twelfth night after Christmas, which, in England, in Shakespeare's day, was a season of revelry. There is in it an almost complete absence of the tragic. Olivia mourns for a dead father and brother; Viola grieves for the supposed death of her brother; he, in turn, weeps for her, whom he believes to be drowned; Sir Andrew's *head is broke across*; Sir Toby has a *bloody coxcomb*. These, however, are but passing shadows, which give the play, at times, a sombre hue, and which, by contrast, bring into brighter light, and

make more vivid, the humor and happiness which pervade it. No one in it is cynical or brutal. The foibles which it portrays are not harmful, distressing, but are harmless, kindly, innocent, and such as

May rather pluck on laughter than revenge.

The characters divide themselves into three groups. In every work of art there are many factors. Each factor in itself is important, and must aid in producing the general effect. In order to make the work of art more effective and suggestive, these factors are frequently grouped.<sup>1</sup> In this play there are three groups:

The Ducal Group; composed of the Duke, Valentine, Curio.

The Olivia Group; composed of Olivia, her relatives and dependents. This group includes, besides Olivia, Maria, her waiting-woman, Sir Toby Belch, her kinsman, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, her wooer, Malvolio, her steward, Fabian, and Feste the Clown.

The Third Group: Sebastian and Antonio.

Between these groups, more or less disconnected with all of them, is Viola. She is high-born, beautiful, intellectually keen, appreciative of fun, gracious and lovely. She is the heroine of the play. She is the principal Complicating, and also the principal Resolving, force in the drama. This is her primary dramatic function.

She is also a Link-Person. A Link-Person in a play is a dramatic hook and eye. The function of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Raymond, *The Genesis of Art-Form*, pp. 97-124.

such a character is to bring together the different *dramatis personæ*. Viola is the Duke's messenger to Olivia. As she herself says, describing her dramatic life after she was saved, and

. . . preserved to serve this noble count.  
All the occurrence of my fortune since  
Hath been between this lady [Olivia], and this lord [the  
Duke].

Still another dramatic function which Viola fulfils is, she is Shakespeare's Type of the Normal. As such she represents and embodies the normal, from which all the other characters have deviated. In this respect she is a perfect contrast to the other characters. The Duke, Olivia, Maria, Sir Toby, Malvolio, and the others are creatures of impulse. They are deficient in self-control. They know no law but their own wills and desires. The Duke is not so much in love as he is lovesick. The same is true of Olivia. She herself confesses she is as mad as Malvolio,

If sad and merry madness equal be.

Sir Toby and the other persons in the Olivia Group, excepting, of course, the Countess, are correctly characterized by Malvolio as *the lighter people*. While they are innocent, free from malice, they are vulgar, sensuous, boisterous, and, as Olivia said of Sir Toby, are

Fit for the mountains and the barbarous caves,  
Where manners ne'er were preach'd !

Their ideal of life is like that of Gratiano:

Let me play the fool :  
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come,  
And let my liver rather heat with wine  
Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.

Between the groups, passing and repassing from one to the other, and in perfect contrast to those who compose them, Shakespeare has placed Viola. She is a passionate, romantic girl. She possesses all the delicacy and refinement of a true, high-bred woman. She is deeply in love with the Duke. Her love, however, is not a mere whim or caprice, not an ungoverned and unreasoning passion, as is that of the Duke, Olivia, and the others, but is full-grown and ardent. It is a true, sincere, heartfelt, and, withal, controlled affection.

#### INTRODUCTION

##### I., 1-4

At the opening of the first Scene, the Duke, in a monologue, reveals his emotional condition. He apostrophizes the *spirit of love*. He also reveals the object of his love, Olivia, and informs the spectator that he has been in love with her from the time his eyes did first see her.

Valentine, a gentleman waiting on the Duke, who has been sent by him on a mission to Olivia, now enters, and reports the result. He gives quite a detailed account of Olivia, which is the dramatic function of Valentine's words. From him the spectator learns that



. . . to season  
A brother's dead love

Olivia has withdrawn from society for seven years, and that she does

. . . water once a day her chamber round  
With eye-offending brine.

From Olivia's devotion to the memory of her brother, the Duke infers what will be her loyalty to an affianced lover. The Scene closes with his words to Valentine:

Away before me to sweet beds of flowers :  
Love-thoughts lie rich when canopied with bowers.

In these words the Duke reveals himself as being not so much in love as lovesick.

In this opening Scene Shakespeare has introduced the Duke in person, and Olivia by a description of her.

In Scene 2, Viola appears. She has been shipwrecked. She, like Olivia, is mourning the loss of a brother, whom she believes dead:

My brother he is in Elysium.

And then she adds:

Perchance he is not drown'd; what think you, sailors?

The dramatic purpose of which question is to foreshadow the appearance of that brother, who is to play an important part in the Resolution of the drama. Shakespeare emphasizes this foreshadow-

ing by a description, given by the Captain, of this brother's safety, whom he

. . . saw . . . hold acquaintance with the waves  
So long as I could see.

The Captain then informs Viola of Orsino, and she, in her comment thereon, reveals two facts: *viz.*, that she had *heard* her father name him, and that *he was a bachelor*. Shakespeare, by this little hint, intimates that Viola's interest in the Duke was more than casual.

The Captain then states that the Duke was in love with Olivia, and refers to her grief for her dead brother. This is an example of Repetition, Alteration, Alternation.

Viola asserts her desire to enter the service of this Duke, and to do so is willing to be disguised as a page. Her principal accomplishment which fits her for this service is her skill in music:

. . . for I can sing  
And speak to him in many sorts of music.

The Captain promises to aid her in attaining her desire.

The Plot of the play is founded on confusion of identity. This has ever been a favorite technical device with dramatists. The Greeks made frequent use of it. There is no more perfect example of it than *Ædipus the King*, by Sophocles, which Aristotle considered the typical example of the highest Greek tragedy, and which is certainly the most perfectly constructed of any of the Greek plays.

Shakespeare, over and over again, hinges a Plot on confusion of identity. In *Love's Labour's Lost*, when the King of Navarre and his attendants go to woo the Princess of France and her ladies, both the former and the latter mask themselves so as to conceal their identity. When Julia goes to see Proteus (*Two Gentlemen of Verona*) she goes dressed in

. . . such weeds  
As may beseeem some well-reputed page.

All the women in the *Merchant of Venice*, at one time or another, assume a male guise. Jessica elopes with Lorenzo

Even in the lovely garnish of a boy.

Portia and Nerissa, before going to Venice to rescue Antonio, doff their dresses, and

. . . are both accoutred like young men.

When Ford (*Merry Wives of Windsor*) wants to assure himself of the faithfulness of Mistress Ford, he disguises himself, and assumes the name of Brook. Vincentio the Duke (*Measure for Measure*) hears rumors of the unfaithfulness and villainy of Angelo, his Deputy. He dresses as a friar, and returns to Vienna. In *Cymbeline*, Belarius assumes the garb of a shepherd, and the name of Morgan. The lovely Imogen so successfully conceals her identity and her sex, but not her loveliness, that Belarius, when he, for the first time, saw her sleeping in the cave, said:

By Jupiter, an angel ! or, if not,  
An earthly paragon !—Behold divineness  
No elder than a boy.

These are but some of the instances in which Shakespeare uses this favorite device of confusion of identity. He always does so with great technical skill, with subtle variations, with exceeding dramatic effectiveness.

In a play of this kind, the Complication is caused by mistake in the identity of different persons. The Resolution is effected by what the Greeks called *anagnôrisis* (*ana*, again, *gnorizo*, to know) to know again.

In *Twelfth Night*, at the very beginning of the play, Viola assumes the garb of a man. This results in a confusion of identity which causes the Complication in the play. The Resolution is effected when she reveals herself as not a man but a woman, the sister of Sebastian, and again dresses in her *maiden weeds*.

In Scene 3, Shakespeare introduces the principal characters in the most important Sub-Action. First come Sir Toby Belch and Maria. Sir Toby reveals himself by his remark, *I am sure care 's an enemy to life*. His life is gay, sensuous, filled with animal enjoyment. For his excessive drinking Maria calls him to account, and informs him of Olivia's displeasure. She then makes a prediction that foreshadows perfectly the conclusion of Sir Toby's dramatic life:

That quaffing and drinking will undo you.

Shakespeare, manifesting fine technique, then makes Maria and Sir Toby describe *a foolish knight* that the latter *brought in one night here to be* [Olivia's] *wooer*. The description of Sir Andrew by Maria and Sir Toby is a fine piece of character-drawing. Its dramatic function is twofold; it describes Sir Andrew, and prepares for his entrance; it also reveals to us Sir Toby and Maria. One's opinions of other people are indexes to one's own mental and emotional nature. Maria describes Sir Andrew as *a very fool and a prodigal; a great quarreller; a coward; and, moreover, he's drunk nightly*. Sir Toby's point of view is quite different. He informs us Sir Andrew is *as tall a man as any's in Illyria; has three thousand ducats a year; plays o' the viol-de-gamboys; and speaks three or four languages word for word without book*.

Shakespeare, having prepared the spectators for the entrance of Sir Andrew, now brings him on the stage. Sir Andrew at once reveals himself to be exactly such a man as has been described. He is a mere echo of Sir Toby. He is as deficient in will as he is in brains. His wooing ceases almost before it begins. *Faith, I'll home to-morrow, Sir Toby: your niece will not be seen; or if she be, it's four to one she'll none of me*. Sir Toby urges him to stay. Sir Andrew assents. He, however, dismisses Olivia from his thoughts, and never pushes his suit. *Shall we set about some revels?* he asks Sir Toby, and from this time these two men devote themselves to revelry and fun.

In Scene 4, the last of the Introduction, Viola

appears *in man's attire*. She is in the service of the Duke. He has selected her as his messenger to Olivia, and gives her detailed instructions as to pushing his suit. She is to

Be not denied access, stand at her doors,  
and do anything

Rather than make unprofited return.

Having obtained an audience with Olivia she is to

. . . unfold the passion of [the Duke's] love.

Shakespeare then puts into the Duke's mouth an exquisite description of Viola:

For they shall yet belie thy happy years,  
That say thou art a man : *seq.*

Neither the Duke, nor any one in the play, excepting the Captain, who has disappeared from the action, knows that Viola is a woman. In order to appreciate the fine technique of Shakespeare in this description, this fact must be borne in mind.

Shakespeare frequently caused his women to exchange *petticoat* for *doublet and hose*. Portia, Nerissa, Jessica, Rosalind, Imogen, and, in this play, Viola, all did so. Yet they were never coarse, mannish, hoidenish, but always refined and feminine. Though *caparisoned* like men, not one of them ever had a *doublet and hose* in her disposition. This is true of Viola. Her *lip*, like Diana's, was *smooth and rubious* ; her *small pipe*, *shrill and sound*, i. e., the tones were clear and pure ;



And all is semblative a woman's part.

In every respect, except her dress, Viola resembled a woman.

The dramatic purpose of this detailed description of Viola is not primarily to inform us of her, although that is a secondary intention of the poet, but is to foreshadow the Resolution of the drama, which is brought about by the revelation of Viola's sex.

Viola accepts the mission of the Duke:

I'll do my best  
To woo your lady.

Then in an *aside* she reveals to us her love for the Duke:

Yet, a barful strife!  
Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife.

In this soliloquy Shakespeare foreshadows the marriage of the Duke and Viola.

So ends this Introduction. In it Shakespeare has introduced in person all the principal characters in the play except Malvolio and the Clown. The causes of the action have been fully revealed. The emotional chord that vibrates through the play has been touched. The action has been clearly foreshadowed, particularly in the words of Viola, with which the Introduction ends.

GROWTH

I., 5-II., 4

Shakespeare begins the Growth of this play with an Episode. The Clown makes his first appearance. With him is Maria.

The Clowns or Fools in the Shakespearian drama were not weak-minded, foolish, but shrewd, keen, wise. They were professional jesters. They dressed in *motley*, a dress one half of which was one color, the other half a different color. Shakespeare has described their nature and function very fully and lucidly. Jaques, who was *ambitious for a motley coat*, says:

I must have liberty  
Withal, as large a charter as the wind,  
To blow on whom I please: *seq.*<sup>1</sup>

Viola thus describes the Clown in *Twelfth Night*:

This fellow is wise enough to play the fool ;  
And to do that well craves a kind of wit :  
He must observe their mood on whom he jests,  
The quality of persons, and the time.

. . . . .  
. . . This is a practice  
As full of labour as a wise man's art :  
For folly that he wisely shows is fit ;  
But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit.

The Fools were deep, contemplative, profoundly philosophic, witty. To this they give expression not in sober speech but by means of badinage, jest. As the Duke Senior said of Touchstone, they

<sup>1</sup> *As You Like It*, II., 7, 47, *seq.* Cf. Murray, *Ancient Greek Literature*, p. 212.

use their folly as a stalking horse and under the presentation of that they shot their wit.

The Elizabethan audiences, more, possibly, than those of this day, seemed to crave humor and farce. There are many indications of that in the Shakespeare plays. They are full of puns. They contain much farce and burlesque. The principal means used by Shakespeare to gratify this love of jest on the part of the spectators who crowded the Globe and Blackfriars theatres was his Clowns and Fools.

Their nature and vocation are illustrated in the first scene of the *Growth* in the play we are studying. Maria and the Clown have a bantering conversation full of audacity and shrewdness on Maria's part, of irony and jest on his. It concludes with the Clown's remark to Maria:

if Sir Toby would leave drinking, thou wert as witty a piece of Eve's flesh as any in Illyria.

Maria immediately perceives that he refers to a marriage between her and Sir Toby. She instantly responds:

Peace, you rogue, no more o' that.

Thus Shakespeare by the apparently trifling, but really wise, words of the Clown, at the very beginning of the action, foreshadows the marriage of Sir Toby and Maria, which takes place before the conclusion of the play.

Maria then makes her exit. The Clown, in a monologue, apostrophizes wit:

Wit, an 't be thy will, put me into good fooling !

The Lady Olivia and Malvolio then enter. The Clown at once begins to jest with her, and to tell her some wholesome truths. She is not in the mood for jesting, being sad on account of her brother's death, and directs her attendants to *take the fool away*. The Clown instantly retorts, *Take away the lady*. He further says, *Lady, cucullus non facit monachum* (all hoods make not monks);

that 's as much to say as I wear not motley in my brain.

He then proceeds to show that not he, but she, is the fool, because she mourns so unreasonably and so persistently for her brother whose soul is in heaven. Malvolio, who is

sick of self-love, and tastes with a distempered appetite, is surprised and disgusted that Olivia *takes delight in such a barren rascal*. Olivia rebukes him, and in so doing again describes the professional Fool:

There is no slander in an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail ; nor no railing in a known discreet man, though he do nothing but reprove.

Aristophanes told the spectators of his plays that if they " retained carefully the ideas of the comic poets, as they kept dried fruits in boxes, their garments would smell odoriferous of wisdom, all the year." We can say of this Clown in *Twelfth Night*, and of all of Shakespeare's Clowns and Fools, their " garments smell odoriferous of wis-

dom." And in this respect, and this is one of his principal dramatic functions, this Clown is a contrast to all the other characters in this play, with the single exception of Viola. He is thoughtful, witty, and by contrast brings into brighter light their thoughtlessness, vacillation, innocent but foolish weakness.

This comic Episode with which the Growth begins now ends, and the Main Action of the drama commences with the arrival of Viola on her mission from the Duke. As has been foreshadowed, Olivia refuses to receive the Duke's messenger. She directs Malvolio to tell him

I am sick, or not at home ; what you will, to dismiss it.

Cesario is *fortified against any denial*, and *swears he will speak with Olivia*. Finally, and with the greatest reluctance, she yields to Viola's persistency, and, covering her face with a veil, decides once more to hear Orsino's embassy.

Although the mission on which Viola comes is serious, very serious to the Duke and Olivia, the interview between the latter and Viola begins with a bantering conversation. This is in perfect harmony with the play, which is a comedy. This conversation is finely tempered. It is playful, illuminative. It discloses the mental and emotional temperaments of the two women. Viola inquires for *the honourable lady of the house*. At first Olivia, who is disguised, refuses to acknowledge herself as the mistress. Viola, in the same mischievous mood, declines to deliver her message, which, *besides it is excellently well penned*, she *had taken great pains to*

*con.* Olivia then declares herself, and asks Viola to deliver her message. Viola refuses to do so, until the attendants have retired, for that message is,

to your ears, divinity ; to any other's, profanation.

The attendants now retire. Olivia and Viola are left alone, and the Main Action of the drama begins movement. Viola requests Olivia to show her face. She does so. Viola praises her beauty, and chides her with cruelty

If you will lead these graces to the grave  
And leave the world no copy.

Viola then delivers her message:

My lord and master loves you.

Olivia replies she cannot reciprocate the Duke's love, and has so informed him.

Then Shakespeare, manifesting fine technique, makes Viola speak in her own person:

If I did love you in my master's flame,  
With such a suffering, such a deadly life,  
In your denial I would find no sense ;  
I would not understand it.

Olivia's interest is excited. She inquires:

Why, what would you ?

Viola answers:

Make me a willow cabin at your gate,  
And call upon my soul within the house : *seq.*



Olivia's interest in this young man, as she supposes Viola to be, grows. She responds:

You might do much.

Then remembering she is a countess, and Viola but a messenger, she inquires:

What is your parentage?

Viola's reply assures her. Olivia reiterates her assertion that she cannot love the Duke:

Let him send no more,  
and then immediately adds:

Unless, perchance, you come to me again,  
To tell me how he takes it.

Viola is incensed at Olivia's rejection of her master's love, and retires, haughtily saying:

Farewell, fair cruelty.

A pause in the movement of the action now ensues, during which Olivia, in two monologues, reveals her newly awakened love for Viola.

How now !  
Even so quickly may one catch the plague?  
Methinks I feel this youth's perfections  
With an invisible and subtle stealth  
To creep in at mine eyes.

In order to reveal her feelings to Viola, and to induce her to return, Olivia sends Malvolio after her with a ring.

After Malvolio's departure, Olivia again in a monologue reveals her innermost desires:

I do I know not what, and fear to find  
Mine eye too great a flatterer for my mind.  
Fate, show thy force : ourselves we do not owe ;  
What is decreed must be, and be this so.

The Complication of the drama has made great progress. It began with the Duke's unrequited love for Olivia. It progressed when Viola fell in love with the Duke. It is made still more complete when Olivia is enamored of Viola. The course of these three loves, of the Duke for Olivia, of Viola for the Duke, of Olivia for Viola, which are inextricably inwoven, which like most loves *do not run smooth*, constitutes the Main Action of the drama.

The Main Action is now interrupted by an Episode (II., 1) during which Antonio and Sebastian, characters in one of the Sub-Actions, are for the first time introduced. When Viola first appeared she mourned for her brother whom she believed shipwrecked, and then expressed the hope,

Perchance he is not drown'd.

This hope is encouraged by a sea captain who saw her brother lashed to a mast and alive. Sebastian now appears, accompanied by Antonio. In a conversation with him Sebastian informs us of the past history of himself and his sister. They were both shipwrecked at the same time. Each thought the other drowned. Sebastian pays her a loving tribute. She was *beautiful, and bore a mind that envy could*

*not but call fair.* He then mentions two facts which, apparently trivial, are really very significant. He and his sister were twins, *both born in an hour*, and *she much resembled me.* The Plot of this play is founded on confusion of identity, the expression of which is a mistaking of Viola for Sebastian, of Sebastian for Viola. Shakespeare foreshadows this, and makes it more reasonable by informing us of the above two facts.

Sebastian is bound to the Count Orsino's court. Antonio begs that he may accompany him. Against Sebastian's wishes, and in the face of great danger, he does so.

This Scene, which is but an Episode, is followed by one (II., 2) in which the Main Action resumes movement. Malvolio meets Viola, and in a churlish manner offers to her the ring which Olivia had sent. Viola, with keen intuition, immediately perceives Olivia's purpose. She graciously tries to screen Olivia, and says:

She took the ring of me : I 'll none of it.

Malvolio peevishly throws it on the ground, and retires.

The truth dawns on Viola.

She loves me, sure.

Still further progress is made in the Complication of the drama. The poet, by means of a few verses spoken by Viola in soliloquy, describes, with the utmost lucidity, this Complication so far as it has been completed:

How will this fadge ? my master loves her dearly ;  
And I, poor monster, fond as much on him ;  
And she, mistaken, seems to dote on me.  
What will become of this ? As I am man,  
My state is desperate for my master's love ;  
As I am woman,—now alas the day !—  
What thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe !  
O time ! thou must untangle this, not I ;  
It is too hard a knot for me to untie !

So tightly has the *desis*, the dramatic knot, been tied, that Viola realizes that it is beyond her power to untie it, and leaves that work to time. In due course of time that knot is untied, the Resolution of the drama is effected, by the happy marriages of the Duke, Viola, and Olivia.

Again the action of the drama is interrupted by a comic Episode (II., 3) in which Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria, Malvolio, and the Clown take part. Its dramatic purpose is twofold: to create Atmosphere, Local Color; and to foreshadow Maria's trick on Malvolio.

Towards the close of the Scene Shakespeare indirectly, but very vividly and touchingly, reveals Olivia's emotional condition. Maria begs Sir Toby not to be too boisterous.

Sweet Sir Toby, be patient for to-night: since the youth of the count's was to-day with my lady, she is much out of quiet.

As Olivia's love for Viola is growing, so is Sir Toby's admiration for Maria. He says:

She's a beagle, true-bred, and one that adores me.

Thus again Shakespeare foreshadows a marriage between Sir Toby and Maria.

The next Scene (II., 4), the last of the Growth, is also episodic. In it Shakespeare again marries music to verse, and uses the former as the medium for the expression of love. The Duke and Viola, who are alone, now hold a conversation on that subject which is uppermost in the Duke's mind. Although unknown to the Duke, Viola also has experienced what Shakespeare elsewhere describes as *the inly touch of love*. The Duke longs for sympathy. He says to Viola:

If ever thou shalt love,  
In the sweet pangs of it remember me.

He then describes himself as like all true lovers:

Unstaid and skittish in all motions else,  
Save in the constant image of the creature  
That is beloved.

The tune which is being played touches a responsive chord in Viola, and, she says,

. . . gives a very echo to the seat  
Where Love is throned.

The Duke perceives she speaks *masterly*, *i. e.*, describes with perfect accuracy the effect of this tune on one in love. So exact, indeed, is Viola in this description that the Duke infers she has been in love:

My life upon 't, young though thou art, thine eye  
Hath stay'd upon some favour that it loves.

Viola acknowledges the correctness of this inference. In response to inquiries of the Duke as to *what kind of woman* she had been in love with Viola replies, *of your complexion, about your years*. Viola thus indirectly reiterates her love for the Duke. It is another example of Repetition, Alteration, Alternation. The thought which the poet wishes to impress on the spectator is repeated, but in an altered form, and with some actions intervening.

The Duke, however, is blinded by his love for Olivia, and is ignorant of Viola's sex. He does not perceive she refers to him. He advises her to love a woman younger than herself, for men's *fancies*, loves,

. . . are more giddy and unfirm,  
More longing, wavering, sooner lost and worn,  
Than women's are. L

The Duke unwittingly recommends himself as, in respect of years, a suitable lover for Viola. He was older. Viola perceived this, and doubtless with a keen appreciation of the exquisite humor, said:

I think it well, my lord.

The conversation is interrupted by the entrance of Curio and the Clown, the latter of whom proceeds to sing a song which

. . . is silly sooth,  
And dallies with the innocence of love.

It voices the feelings of the Duke, and touches a



responsive chord in him, for it sings of one who has been

. . . slain by a fair cruel maid.

The dramatist now makes effective use of Contrast. He follows this song, which is in the minor key, by a little humorous badinage between the Clown who sings it and the Duke. The latter requests the Clown to retire. Before doing so he manifests his keen insight into character by describing that of the love-sick, vacillating, impulsive Duke:

I would have men of such constancy put to sea, that their business might be every thing and their intent every where; for that's it that always makes a good voyage of nothing.

The attendants retire. The Duke and Viola once more are left alone. The Duke orders her:

Get thee to yond same sovereign cruelty,  
and declare his love, which is, he says, far stronger than that which any woman can have for a man. But Viola knows

Too well what love women to men may owe;  
and then in the most exquisite poetry she describes such a love, which, she informs the Duke, was that of a daughter of her father who—

. . . never told her love,  
But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,  
Feed on her damask cheek : *seq.*

The Duke, still blind to the fact that Viola is describing her own love for him, artlessly inquires:

But died thy sister of her love, my boy ?

Viola naïvely replied:

I am all the daughters of my father's house.

The perfect art of the dramatist manifested in this conversation is made apparent when we remember that the facts of which the Duke is ignorant are well known to the spectator of the drama. The description by Viola of her love, made in the most exquisite poetry, is as fine work as Shakespeare ever did.

After this there is a reference by Viola to her brother:

And all the brothers too : and yet I know not.

The dramatic function of this is to foreshadow the appearance later of that brother who is an important factor in the Resolution of the play. By means of Viola, assisted by him, the Complication of the drama is solved, the dramatic knot is untied. Hence this reiterated allusion by Viola to the uncertainty of her brother's death. He may be dead, *and yet I know not*.

The Scene ends by arrangements for the renewal of the Duke's suit. Viola inquires:

Sir, shall I to this lady ?

The Duke promptly and decisively responds:

Ay, that 's the theme.  
To her in haste ; give her this jewel ; say,  
My love can give no place, bide no denay.

Thus ends the Growth. In it the action is very slight. It illustrates perfectly the nature of comedy. In this species of dramatic composition the Plot is very simple. The incidents, situations, character-portraiture, are very important.

When Viola obeys the Duke's command and goes to the lady Olivia, the action of the drama again begins movement and the Climax commences.

#### CLIMAX

#### II., 5-III., *finis*

Every character which takes an important part in the action of this drama appears in the Climax. Those who do not are a Sea-Captain, friend to Viola, Valentine and Curio, gentlemen attending on the Duke. These are simply Link-Persons. Their part in the action is insignificant. All the other characters appear in person except Orsino. He is there in the person of his representative Cesario, who makes for him the final appeal to Olivia.

A large part of the Climax is devoted to the representation of Maria's trick upon Malvolio. It is, as Maria said it would be, *sport royal*, for he is *fooled black and blue*. This trick really is a play within a play. It is described by Fabian :

If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable fiction.

The Clown later describes it as an *interlude*. That it really was.

Shakespeare in the early part of his career as a dramatic writer frequently introduced a play within a play. In *Hamlet*, the hero says:

. . . the play 's the thing  
Wherein I 'll catch the conscience of the king.

*The Taming of the Shrew* is prefaced with an *Introduction* in which is a play. In *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* the nuptials of Theseus and Hippolyta are celebrated with the play of the Athenian mechanicals. In *Twelfth Night* the Malvolio trick is a play within a play.

This manifests crudity. It violates, more or less, the primal law of Art, Unity. When Shakespeare reached maturity he perceived this, and discontinued the use of plays within plays. *Hamlet* is an exception. Those plays which are the highest manifestation of his constructive genius are distinguished by perfect Unity.

In this Malvolio play or interlude, Malvolio's Character-Development reaches its climax. He has been described by Olivia as *sick of self-love*, and by Maria as *a time-pleaser ; an affectioned ass*. The result of the letter which Maria drops in his way is to make of him *a contemplative idiot*.

The scene is Olivia's garden. This is a love comedy. It is filled with sunshine and flowers. Malvolio enters soliloquizing:

'T is but fortune ; all is fortune. Maria once told me she did affect me : *seq.*

He imagines himself Olivia's husband, and assumes not only the title, but also the authority of such. As he saunters through the garden he discovers the letter Maria has written and thrown where he will find it. The effect is all that Maria intended it should be.

Olivia later inquires of Maria for Malvolio. Maria informs her: *He's coming, madam; but in very strange manner. He is, sure, possessed, madam.* He enters and acts, in every particular, as directed by the letter. He appears cross-gartered, smiling. When questioned by Olivia he quotes from her letter. She, being entirely ignorant of the letter, and perceiving that his replies are wholly irrelevant, concludes he is insane:

Why, this is very midsummer madness.

From the kindest, though mistaken, motives, she commends him to the care of Maria and Sir Toby. Olivia then retires, and Malvolio is left to the tender care of Sir Toby, Fabian, and Maria. All the while they, and Sir Andrew Aguecheek as well, have been in the secret. They were concealed in the garden when Malvolio found the letter; they heard his soliloquizing describing what he would do when he won Olivia, and was Count Malvolio. They had been informed by Maria of his conduct towards Olivia. Now when Olivia retires, Sir Toby and Fabian enter, and, together with Maria, carry the trick to its consummation. They treat Malvolio as if he were insane, and when he retires determine to put him under guard. *Come*, Sir Toby says,

we'll have him in a dark room and bound. My niece is already in the belief that he's mad: we may carry it thus, for our pleasure and his penance, till our very pastime, tired out of breath, prompt us to have mercy on him.

Thus Malvolio has reached the Climax of his dramatic life. He is bound, placed in a dark room, and remains there till the Catastrophe. He ceases to be a suitor for Olivia's hand, and an active force in this drama.

Another result of Maria's trick is to develop to the highest degree Sir Toby's admiration for her. He makes her, after his fashion, an offer of marriage. To Sir Andrew and Fabian he says:

I could marry this wench for this device.  
And ask no other dowry with her but such another jest.

Maria enters a moment later, and Sir Toby asks her:

Wilt thou set thy foot o' my neck?

As we learn later in the play Maria does set her foot on Sir Toby's neck, and, from what we know of her and of him, it is fair to presume she keeps it there, and presses down pretty hard. Sir Toby and Maria have reached the Climax of their dramatic lives.

At the close of the Growth the Duke had again sent Viola to Olivia. She now appears on her mission of love. As she enters Olivia's garden she meets the Clown. They engage in a conversation full of raillery and banter.



The comedy in this play is very largely the work of the women, Viola, in the Main Action, Maria, in the Sub-Action. Viola's humor is refined, thoughtful, kindly. Maria's approaches the satiric. The laughter of both of them, however, is very different from the gross laughter of Sir Toby, the vapid smile of Sir Andrew. That of Viola and Maria is the rich laughter of the heart and mind. It is ethereal and illuminating, like light or color.

In the conversation between Viola and the Clown the latter reveals himself to be what he describes himself, *not Olivia's fool, but her corrupter of words*. He distorts and misconstrues all Viola says. Yet, withal, he does it in such a jolly, good-natured way, with such a mixture of jest and earnest, that Viola says:

I warrant thou art a merry fellow and carest for nothing.

When she gives him some money he expresses the hope that

Jove, in his next commodity of hair, [will] send thee a beard !

Viola has previously informed us she is in love with the Duke. She now again reveals her emotional condition when she replies,

I am almost sick for one,

then in an *aside* adds,

though I would not have it grow on my chin.

Thus again Shakespeare foreshadows the marriage of Viola to the Duke.

The Clown goes to seek Olivia. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew enter. For the first time they meet Viola. To Sir Toby's inquiry,

Will you encounter the house?

Viola answers,

I am bound to your niece, sir.

Olivia and Maria enter. Viola refuses to deliver her message except to Olivia alone. The others all retire.

The comic now temporarily gives way to the serious. All sunshine makes the desert. If there is nothing serious in a comedy the humor becomes monotonous, lifeless.

Viola informs Olivia:

I come to whet your gentle thoughts

on the Duke Orsino's behalf. Olivia frankly avows her fondness for Viola:

I did send,  
After the last enchantment you did here,  
A ring in chase of you : so did I abuse  
Myself, my servant and, I fear me, you : *seq.*

Viola in response expresses pity for Olivia. The latter considers that *a degree to love*. Viola responds:

No, not a grize :

Olivia is chagrined :

Be not afraid, good youth, I will not have you.

This mood is but temporary. Almost immediately Olivia is overcome by her love, and says :

Cesario, by the roses of the spring,  
By maidhood, honour, truth and everything,  
I love thee so, that, maugre all thy pride,  
Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide.

Viola informs her that she cannot reciprocate that love.

I have one heart, one bosom and one truth,  
And that no woman has ; nor never none  
Shall mistress be of it, save I alone.

Still Olivia does not give up hope. As she retires she beseeches Viola to

. . . come again ; for thou perhaps mayst move  
That heart, which now abhors, to like his love.

Once more Viola does come. Olivia's love for her has not been chilled. On the contrary, it has grown more intense. She feels mortified.

I have said too much unto a heart of stone  
And laid mine honour too unchary out :

but her passion *mocks reproof*. When Viola makes one final appeal to her for . . . *your true love for my master*, Olivia frankly declares to Viola she

has given that love to her. Viola again declines it, and Olivia, still refusing to accept her answer as final, says:

Well, come again to-morrow : fare thee well :  
A fiend like thee might bear my soul to hell.

Olivia then makes her exit. She has finally and irrevocably rejected the suit of the Duke. Her passion for Viola has become all-absorbing. The Climax of the play, so far as she is an actor therein, has been reached.

Sir Andrew's wooing also reaches a climax. To Sir Toby he says:

No, faith, I'll not stay a jot longer.

The reason for this resolve is:

I saw your niece do more favours to the count's serving-man than ever she bestowed upon me.

Fabian tries to induce Sir Andrew to believe:

This was a great argument of love in her toward you.

Fabian tells him further he has missed his opportunity, and that the only way to retrieve his fortune is by some *laudable attempt either of valour or policy*.

Sir Toby advises him to

Challenge me the count's youth to fight with him :

Sir Andrew acts on this advice, and retires to write the challenge. The next time he appears he brings it. Sir Toby reads it aloud. Both he and Fabian consider it:

Very brief, and to exceeding good sense—less.

They send Sir Andrew away to scout for Viola  
at the corner of the orchard like a bum-bailly :

At the same time Sir Toby goes to seek Viola. He  
refuses to deliver the letter, it

being so excellently ignorant, will breed no terror in the  
youth : he will find it comes from a clodpole.

He determines to deliver the challenge by word of  
mouth. Shortly afterwards he meets Viola, who has  
just left Olivia. He conveys to her the challenge  
of Sir Andrew, and accompanies it with a terrifying  
description of Sir Andrew's fierceness and bravery.  
The result is she is in mortal terror of Sir Andrew.  
Though caparisoned like a man she was a woman,  
gentle, refined, feminine. Like Rosalind, she did  
not *wear a doublet and hose in her disposition*. Sir  
Toby leaves Viola and seeks Sir Andrew. He gives  
him a description of Viola's deadly skill in fencing.  
The result is Sir Andrew becomes as afraid of Viola  
as she is of him. Fabian now enters with Viola,  
urging her to fight. Sir Toby does the same with  
Sir Andrew. Both the contestants are so terrified  
they can hardly stand. However, they draw their  
swords. Before a blow is struck Antonio enters,  
and the fight is stopped. Why ? For two reasons :

I.—This is a comedy. While there is, and must  
be, in it something that is sombre, serious, there  
must be nothing really tragic.

II.—To have allowed the fight to proceed would

have been a mistake on Shakespeare's part in Character-Development. Viola was a woman, gentle, high-born; Sir Andrew was a coward, who, as Maria has informed us, had

the gift of a coward to allay the gust he hath in quarrelling.

If Shakespeare had allowed Viola and Sir Andrew bravely to attack each other the development of their characters would have lacked consistency.

Antonio, who had left Sebastian but an hour or two previously, now enters and mistakes Viola for him. It was a natural mistake. Viola was a twin-sister of Sebastian. She much resembled him. She had adopted his dress:

So went he suited to his watery tomb :

Antonio's love for Sebastian prompts him to interfere immediately :

Put up your sword. If this young gentleman  
Have done offence, I take the fault on me :  
If you offend him, I for him defy you.

Sir Toby resents Antonio's interference. Officers enter. Viola and Sir Andrew put up their swords. One of the officers arrests Antonio *at the suit of Count Orsino*. Antonio, still mistaking Viola for her brother Sebastian, says to her:

This comes with seeking you :  
But there's no remedy ; I shall answer it.  
What will you do, now my necessity  
Makes me to ask you for my purse ?



Viola is nonplussed. She had never seen Antonio.  
She replies:

What money, sir?

Antonio upbraids her

. . . with those kindnesses  
That I have done for you.

Viola responds:

I know of none ;  
Nor know I you by voice or any feature.

Antonio considers this the basest ingratitude, and  
before being led away by the officers says to Viola:

Thou hast, Sebastian, done good feature shame.

With the mention of her brother's name the truth  
begins to dawn on Viola:

Methinks his words do from such passion fly,  
That he believes himself : so do not I.  
Prove true, imagination, O, prove true,  
That I, dear brother, be now ta'en for you !

. . . . .

He nam'd Sebastian : I my brother know  
Yet living in my glass ; even such and so  
In favour was my brother, and he went  
Still in this fashion, colour, ornament,  
For him I imitate : O, if it prove,  
Tempests are kind and salt waves fresh in love.

Viola then makes her exit, followed shortly after by  
Sir Toby, Fabian, Sir Andrew.

The action of the drama has developed to its highest point. The Complication has been made complete. All the Complicating and Resolving forces have met around Viola, the heroine. The Resolution of the drama, which is effected by *anagnórisis* or Recognition, is clearly foreshadowed.

## FALL

## IV

At the beginning of the Fall Shakespeare again makes use of confusion of identity, but with a difference. Viola has just been mistaken by Antonio for Sebastian. Now the Clown mistakes Sebastian for Viola. A moment later the same mistake is made by Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Fabian, Olivia.

The Clown had been sent by Olivia to find Viola. He meets Sebastian, and supposes him to be Viola. Evidently something, which the dramatist does not report, had been done or said which led Sebastian to rebuff the Clown, for on meeting him the Clown had said:

Will you make me believe that I am not sent for you?

Sebastian repels him. The Clown is so confident, however, that Sebastian is only acting a part, and is Viola, that he responds:

No, I do not know you ; nor I am not sent to you by my lady, to bid you come speak with her ; nor your name is not Master Cesario ; nor this is not my nose neither. Nothing that is so is so.

Sebastian considers the Clown's conduct but a jest, and, good-naturedly, gives him money, with the request that he vent his folly somewhere else. By so doing he wins the Clown's good-will.

At this time Sir Andrew, Sir Toby, Fabian enter. At the close of the Climax, after Viola had made her exit, she was denounced as a coward by Sir Toby and Fabian. This inspired Sir Andrew with courage. He said :

'Slid, I 'll after him again and beat him.

He, together with Sir Toby and Fabian, now meets the Clown and Sebastian. Sir Andrew, mistaking the latter for Viola, immediately assaults him :

Now, sir, have I met you again ? there 's for you.

Sebastian promptly makes a counter-attack :

Why, there 's for thee, and there, and there.

Sebastian is as much confused by this assault as by the Clown's mistake, and says :

Are all the people mad ?

The Clown now withdraws with the expressed intention of informing Olivia of Sir Andrew's attack on Sebastian. Sir Toby seizes Sebastian. Sir Andrew's courage fails him. He says :

I 'll go another way to work with him ; I 'll have an action of battery against him.

Sebastian now challenges Sir Toby to fight. Sir

Toby draws his sword. At this moment Olivia enters. She commands:

Hold, Toby ; on thy life I charge thee, hold !

Again, before any one has been hurt, the fight is stopped; and for the same reasons that the duel between Sir Andrew and Viola was stopped before a blow was struck. Shakespeare intended the duel to be not a real, but a mock one. Had it proceeded, doubtless either Sebastian or Sir Toby would have been wounded, possibly killed. That would have caused a tragedy. Shakespeare was writing a love-comedy. Olivia rebukes Sir Toby, and then peremptorily orders him *out of my sight !*

Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Fabian now retire, leaving Olivia alone with Sebastian. She, mistaking him for Viola, turns to him, and entreats him not to be offended by Sir Toby's uncivil conduct, and to

Go with me to my house,

. . . . .  
 . . . thou shalt not choose but go :  
 Do not deny.

Sebastian, who has not previously met Olivia, is still more perplexed. He says:

What relish is in this ? how runs the stream ?  
 Or I am mad, or else this is a dream :

He fails utterly to understand the situation. He consents, however, to be ruled by fair Olivia. She replies: *O, say so, and so be !* and they depart together for her house.

In the second Scene of the Fall Shakespeare portrays the treatment Malvolio receives from Maria and Sir Toby, to whose care Olivia has confided him. At the suggestion of Maria, who is the leader in this Sub-Action, the Clown assumes the character of Sir Topas, the Curate, dons gown and beard, and goes to the dark room in which Malvolio is confined. The Clown is urged on by Maria and Sir Toby. He taunts Malvolio until he is nearly insane. Malvolio realizes he is in the power of his enemies. He begs the Clown for *some ink, paper and light ; and convey what I will set down to my lady*. The Clown promises to do so, and departs.

With the conclusion of this Scene (IV., 2) the Malvolio affair is brought to a close, and with it the dramatic life of Maria. The conception of the trick on Malvolio was hers; the plan for putting that conception into action originated with her; she carried it to its full consummation. When Malvolio was bound and put in a dark room her work was ended. Having, as one result of this device, won Sir Toby's love, and married him, her dramatic mission was ended. She therefore disappears from the action of the drama.

Sebastian had consented to be ruled by Olivia, and had departed with her. He now appears alone in her garden. His amazement at the conduct of the Clown, Sir Toby, Fabian, and Sir Andrew, and lastly of Olivia, has increased until he almost questions his sanity. And yet Shakespeare does not allow him seriously to think that.

This is the air ; this is the glorious sun ;

This pearl she gave me, I do feel 't and see 't ;

And though 't is wonder that enwraps me thus,  
Yet 't is not madness.

Nor does Shakespeare allow him to believe that Olivia is mad. If she were

She could not sway her house, command her followers,  
Take and give back affairs and their dispatch  
With such a smooth, discreet and stable bearing  
As I perceive she does.

And yet, and this is the conclusion Sebastian reaches:

There 's something in 't  
That is deceivable.

If Sebastian, Olivia, and the other actors in this drama were insane the drama would lose interest. Their conduct not being governed, at least to some extent, by reason, intelligence, would cease to be lucid, perspicuous. No drama could be written, all the actors in which were idiots or lunatics. A character might in the course of the action, from excessive grief or anxiety, become deranged, *e. g.*, Lear. Or, a character, for a shrewd purpose, might assume madness, as did Hamlet. The action of a play must be dominated and carried forward to completion by sane men and women. It is not possible to write a drama in which the actors are idiots or lunatics. Why? Art is controlled by law. In the art of man there is an intelligent order. Hence in this play, while Shakespeare increases Sebastian's amazement until *wonder enwraps* him, he does not make



him insane, nor for a moment allow him to believe that either he or Olivia is so.

By allowing the amazement of Sebastian to increase—and this is Shakespeare's purpose in so doing—the dramatist has excited to an intenser degree the interest of the spectator. The Complication is apparently, although not really, increased, in order to make more effective the Resolution. That now is hastened by the appearance of Olivia. She, accompanied by a Priest, enters. She requests Sebastian to fulfil his promise to be ruled by her, and to go with her and

. . . this holy man  
 Into the chantry by : there, before him,  
 And underneath that consecrated roof,  
 Plight me the full assurance of your faith ;  
 That my most jealous and too doubtful soul  
 May live at peace.

He does so. He and Olivia are betrothed. They cease to be Complicating factors in the drama, and as a consequence the Resolution, the untying of the dramatic knot, is, to that extent, effected.

#### CATASTROPHE

#### V

In the Catastrophe of a drama *the whirligig of time brings in his revenges*, and also his compensations. Shakespeare generally does that directly and rapidly. In the Catastrophe of this play, however, he apparently, but not really, departs from his usual

method. While everything is working rapidly towards the Resolution of the drama, while every word, every deed, leads towards that, and tends to produce it, still, at the same time, everything in the fore part of the Catastrophe, apparently and superficially, tends to greater Complication. The result of this is that when the Resolution, at last, is reached the dramatic effect is heightened and made much more powerful. It is the darkness of the night becoming more pronounced just before the advent of day.

At the beginning of the Catastrophe the Clown enters bearing the letter which Malvolio had written to Olivia. Fabian expresses a wish to see the letter. The Clown makes a counter-request:

Do not desire to see this letter.

Just then the Duke, Viola, Curio, and Lords enter. The Duke accosts the Clown, asking him:

Belong you to the Lady Olivia?

The Clown answers in the affirmative. A conversation then ensues in which, under the guise of facetiousness, the Clown says some wise things, amongst others that he is the better for his foes, the worse for his friends. The Duke appreciates the fun, and in accordance with the custom of the time gives the Clown money. The Duke says:

If you will let your lady know I am here to speak with her, and bring her along with you, it may awake my bounty further.

The Clown departs to seek Olivia. Just at this time Antonio in the custody of officers, enters. Viola recognizes him, and says:

Here comes the man, sir, that did rescue me.

The Duke remembers Antonio's face, and pays a great tribute to his bravery. Viola recalls Antonio's kindness to her, and informs the Duke that when she was attacked by Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Antonio drew his sword in her defence:

But in conclusion put strange speech on me :  
I know not what 't was but distraction.

The Duke ignores Viola's tribute to Antonio, and brands him as

Notable pirate ! thou salt-water thief !

and then asks him :

What foolish boldness brought thee to their mercies,  
Whom thou, in terms so bloody and so dear,  
Hast made thine enemies ?

Antonio fearlessly resents Orsino's insults.

The information that Antonio had rescued Sebastian from a watery grave has been given by the dramatist in the fore part of the play. He now rehearses some of the facts of Antonio's life previous to his meeting with Sebastian. This information is valuable as enabling the spectator of the drama to form a very accurate estimate of Antonio. Shakespeare errs, however, in not having conveyed that

information earlier in the play. It is a canon of dramatic art that knowledge of what has taken place previous to the beginning of the drama, and which it is necessary the spectator should possess in order to understand and appreciate the play, should be given in the Introduction. Shakespeare, by not informing us, until the Catastrophe is reached, of Antonio's capture of the Duke's vessels, violates this law of dramatic construction, and weakens this play.

After Antonio resents the Duke's characterization of him as *pirate, thief*, he said :

A witchcraft drew me hither.

Turning to Viola, whom he mistakes for Sebastian, he recapitulates his experiences with Sebastian, and with Viola :

That most ingrateful boy there by your side,  
From the rude sea's enraged and foamy mouth  
Did I redeem ; . . .

. . . . .  
Drew to defend him when he was beset :  
Where being apprehended, his false cunning,  
Not meaning to partake with me in danger,  
Taught him to face me out of his acquaintance,  
And grew a twenty years removed thing  
While one would wink ; denied me mine own purse,  
Which I had recommended to his use  
Not half an hour before.

Both Viola and the Duke are amazed. The former says :

How can this be ?

The latter :

When came he to this town ?

Antonio replies :

To-day, my lord ; and for three months before,  
No interim, not a minute's vacancy,  
Both day and night did we keep company.

Just at this moment Olivia and her attendants enter. This is the first time she and the Duke have met. The very sight of her kindles to the intensest degree the fervor of the Duke's love :

Here comes the countess : now heaven walks on earth.

Then addressing Antonio :

. . . fellow, thy words are madness :  
Three months this youth hath tended upon me.

Antonio is taken one side. Olivia says to the Duke :

What would my lord, but that he may not have,  
Wherein Olivia may seem serviceable ?

Ignoring the Duke, not waiting for any reply from him, she turned to Viola, and said :

Cesario, you do not keep promise with me.

She, like Antonio, mistakes Viola for Sebastian. As the Duke's love had been intensified by the presence of the object of that love, so also is Olivia's. She haughtily, nay, more, contemptuously, rejects the Duke's protestations of affection, and informs him if what he has to say

. . . be aught to the old tune, my lord,  
It is as fat and fulsome to mine ear  
As howling after music.

The limit of the Duke's forbearance has been reached. His resentment is aroused. He retorts:

. . . you uncivil lady,  
To whose ingrate and unauspicious altars  
My soul the faithfull'st offerings hath breathed out  
That e'er devotion tender'd!

Love and hate are very near to each other. In fact, they are

. . . the very warders  
Each of the other's borders.<sup>1</sup>

The Duke's feeling now changes from love to hate. In such a case

. . . passion seeks aid from its opposite passion.<sup>2</sup>

So outraged and enraged, indeed, is the Duke by Olivia's insulting rejection of him, and by her love for Viola, that he is tempted to kill Viola:

Why should I not, had I the heart to do it,  
Like to the Egyptian thief at point of death,  
Kill what I love?

This he cannot do. His love for Viola restrains him. He determines, however, to revenge himself on Olivia:

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *Pippa Passes*, Scene 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*



But this your minion, whom I know you love,  
 And whom, by heaven I swear, I tender dearly,  
 Him will I tear out of that cruel eye,  
 Where he sits crowned in his master's spite.

Then to Cesario he says:

Come, boy, with me; my thoughts are ripe in mischief:  
 I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love,  
 To spite a raven's heart within a dove.

From the very first time he saw her the Duke had been attached to Viola. This attachment had strengthened and deepened with time. In his outburst of indignation and wrath at Olivia's *non-regardance* of his faith and rejection of his suit, no less than three times he declares his love for Cesario, whom he believes to be a boy. Referring to him the Duke asks:

Why should I not . . .  
 Kill what I love?

. . . whom, by heaven I swear, I tender dearly.

. . .  
 I'll sacrifice the lamb that I do love.

Thus, by a technique that is simply perfect, does Shakespeare reveal to us the profound, intense, overmastering love of the Duke for Viola. And this love Viola reciprocates to the extremest degree. Filled with an affection which is enthusiastic, soulful, self-abandoning, she offers herself a willing sacrifice on the altar of her love for the Duke.

And I, most jocund, apt and willingly,  
To do you rest, a thousand deaths would die.

And this avowal of her love, which would lead her even to die for him, is reiterated and emphasized when Olivia asks:

Where goes Cesario ?

Viola replies:

After him I love  
More than I love these eyes, more than my life,  
More, by all mores, than e'er I shall love wife.

Thus, by this avowal of love on the part of the Duke and of Viola for each other, Shakespeare has foreshadowed their happy marriage, which is so soon to be consummated.

Olivia now is mystified. She asks:

. . . how am I beguiled !

Viola perceives that Olivia refers to her, and immediately inquires:

Who does beguile you ? who does do you wrong ?

Olivia, believing without the shadow of a doubt that Viola is Sebastian, the young man to whom but two hours before she had been betrothed, says to her:

Hast thou forgot thyself ! is it so long ?

The Duke determines to retire, and orders Viola to accompany him. Olivia addresses Viola as *hus-*

*band.* She challenges Viola to deny it. Viola does so, emphatically, unhesitatingly, immediately:

No, my lord, not I.

Olivia believes it is but Viola's fear of her master that leads her to make the denial, and urges her to be brave:

Fear not, Cesario ; take thy fortunes up.

Just at this moment the Priest enters. Olivia appeals to him. He rehearses with the utmost particularity what had taken place between Olivia and Sebastian, whom he as well as Olivia supposes to be Viola:

A contract of eternal bond of love : *seq.*

So conclusive does this testimony seem to the Duke that his confidence in Viola is annihilated. He is angered that she should have deceived him. He wrathfully addresses her as *dissembling cub* ! and orders her to leave his presence. Viola protests. Olivia interposes.

O, do not swear !

The mistaken identity of Viola is now complete. Olivia, the Duke, the Priest, all believe she is the man who has been betrothed to Olivia. Antonio also thinks she is Sebastian.

Shakespeare now, manifesting perfect technique, diverts attention from her to Sebastian. It is a dramatic necessity that this should be done before

Sebastian appears in person, and he and Viola meet. Before Viola obeys the Duke's command to retire, and while she, Olivia, the Duke, the Priest are together, Sir Andrew enters. Some one, he says:

. . . has broke my head across and has given Sir Toby a bloody coxcomb too.

Olivia inquires:

Who has done this, Sir Andrew?

He replies:

The count's gentleman, one Cesario.

Then seeing Viola, he adds:

'Od's lifelings, here he is !

and then charges her with the deed.

You broke my head for nothing.

Viola, of course, supposing Sir Andrew referred to the duel, which was interrupted by the entrance of Antonio before a blow had been struck, replied:

Why do you speak to me? I never hurt you :  
You drew your sword upon me without cause ;  
But I bespake you fair, and hurt you not.

Of the fact that he was hurt Sir Andrew had no doubt. It never occurred to him that Viola was not the man who attacked him. He supposed that she was simply quibbling about words:

If a bloody coxcomb be a hurt, you have hurt me.

Sir Toby and the Clown enter. Sir Andrew appeals to him. Sir Toby was too drunk and too much wounded to bother about the identity of Viola. Besides, he was fairly beaten in a fight into which he had willingly entered. He does not whimper like Sir Andrew, but takes his punishment like a man. Replying to the Duke's question,

How now, gentleman ! how is 't with you ?

and speaking of Viola, he said :

That 's all one : has hurt me, and there 's the end on 't.

Olivia orders :

Get him to bed, and let his hurt be look'd to.

He departs. He was in no condition to appear as Maria's newly wedded husband. Hence neither she nor he could appear with the two other pairs of lovers at the end of the play. The Clown, Fabian, Sir Andrew, also depart with Sir Toby.

Sir Toby's dramatic life, and that also of Sir Andrew, is ended. Neither of them appears again. Shakespeare's characterization of them has been, from first to last, uniform, consistent. Their little dramatic lives were rounded, not with a sleep, but with a drunken revel.

It is an inviolable law of dramatic art that fundamental traits of character must be revealed early in

a play. Sir Toby when he first appeared was under the influence of liquor. Maria says to him :

That quaffing and drinking will undo you.

That prediction has been verified. He disappears from this play *in drink*, as Sir Andrew describes him, and sorely wounded. Sir Andrew's character, likewise, is uniform. From first to last he has been what Sir Toby, in the last words he utters in the drama, describes him, *an ass-head and a coxcomb and a knave, a thin-faced knave, a gull !*

The dramatic purpose of these characters has been, primarily, that of Contrast. They were set over against the Duke, Olivia, Malvolio, all of whom were serious. In perfect contrast with the latter are Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Maria. They are gay, light-hearted. Their lives are merry, and free from care. By means of them Shakespeare brings into more vivid light the characters in the Main Action.

No sooner have the Clown, Fabian, Sir Toby, and Sir Andrew made their exit than Sebastian enters. This is the first time in the drama he and Viola have met. The meeting takes place in the presence of the Duke and his suite; of Olivia and her attendants; of the Priest; of Antonio. All the characters in the Main Action, several of those in the Sub-Actions are present. This is a fine example of Character-Grouping.

Sebastian first addresses Olivia, and expresses regret for having injured Sir Toby.

I am sorry, madam, I have hurt your kinsman.



But a moment before Olivia had addressed Viola as *husband*. Olivia's claim had been confirmed by the Priest, who stated that within two hours, and in his presence, she and Viola had been betrothed. Olivia's surprise at Sebastian's appearance and words may be imagined. She manifests it in her face. Sebastian perceives it. He says:

You throw a strange regard upon me.

Sebastian supposes Olivia is offended at his conduct in injuring Sir Toby. He begs Olivia's pardon; and then abjures her, by the vows which recently passed between them, to grant it:

Pardon me, sweet one, even for the vows  
We made each other but so late ago.

The Duke, who since Sebastian's entrance has been observing closely, but has remained silent, now says:

One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons,  
A natural perspective, that is and is not !

Sebastian, who had never previously met the Duke, and was not acquainted with him, paid no attention to the Duke's remark. He did know Antonio, and knew him only to love him. They had not met since they had separated, Antonio to seek safety at the Elephant, Sebastian to wander through the town. Since that parting each had had many surprising experiences. Antonio supposed that Sebastian had forsaken him. Sebastian had mourned

over the loss of Antonio. Now with glad surprise, and the expression of his solicitude, Sebastian says:

Antonio, O my dear Antonio !  
How have the hours rack'd and tortured me,  
Since I have lost thee !

Antonio, who, like Olivia, has mistaken Viola for Sebastian, responds:

Sebastian are you ?

Sebastian acknowledges that he is. Antonio is as much surprised as the Duke:

How have you made division of yourself ?  
An apple, cleft in two, is not more twin  
Than these two creatures.

Olivia expresses her bewilderment :

Most wonderful !

Sebastian and Viola now stand face to face.

Shakespeare has prolonged the suspense to the longest time, has intensified it to the greatest degree. The Duke is wrathful at what he believes Viola's hypocrisy. Olivia is almost heartbroken at what she considers the desertion of her husband. Viola is discarded and deserted by the man to whom she has just confessed a love so strong that for him she would die *a thousand deaths*. The interest of the spectator has been wrought up to the highest degree. Any further prolongation of this suspense would have been mistaken technique. Shakespeare,

therefore, now begins the final Resolution of the drama. This is done, quickly and perfectly, by means of Sebastian and Viola. They refer to the shipwreck, by which they were separated; to their father, *the mole upon his brow*, his death. Sebastian says if Viola were a woman he should accept her as a sister. She perceives, and so states that her

. . . masculine usurp'd attire,

alone stands in the way of complete recognition. Shakespeare's verses narrating this conversation are a perfect specimen of narrative poetry. Like some beautiful rose which has been growing for weeks, then suddenly over night blooms into the perfect flower, so the complete Resolution of this drama, which has long been delayed, reaches its full and complete development in this conversation. With the recognition of the fact that Viola is a woman, and the sister of Sebastian, all the Complication of the Plot is easily resolved. Olivia would have been betrothed to a maid.

But nature to her bias drew in that,

and she, unwittingly, was betrothed to a man. A wise and unerring Fate provided for her an excellent husband. The Duke accepts the situation. He cannot win Olivia. From the first he has been attached to Viola. He now recalls all her protestations of affection for him. Making one final allusion to her assumed sex, which is a dramatic touch of great beauty, and is as sweet as the last note of dying music, he says:

Boy, thou hast said to me a thousand times  
Thou never shouldst love woman like to me.

Viola responds:

And all those sayings will I over-swear.

In token of their betrothal they take hands. The Duke expresses the wish to see her in *thy woman's weeds*.

Shakespeare now directs attention to some of the characters in the Sub-Actions, whose dramatic lives it is necessary to bring to a close. For the time being the Main Action remains stationary, while two of the uncompleted Sub-Actions progress to their Catastrophe or completion.

The Captain who had rescued Viola, and told her that he had seen her brother still alive, bound to a strong mast, floating in the water, had disappeared from the play just after having given that information. No more has been heard of him since this allusion to him in the Introduction. Viola now recalls him. When the Duke expresses the wish to see her in *woman's weeds*, she says:

The captain that did bring me first on shore  
Hath my maid's garments : he upon some action  
Is now in durance, at Malvolio's suit.

Olivia orders him *enlarged*. Of his experiences during his imprisonment the spectator has not been informed. The Duke, therefore, a little later, speaking of Malvolio, says:

He hath not told us of the captain yet.

Nor does he, for when the Duke utters these words Malvolio had retired not to return.

Viola's allusion to Malvolio recalls him to Olivia. She commands:

Fetch Malvolio hither :

And yet, alas, now I remember me,

They say, poor gentleman, he 's much distract.

She recalls the trying experiences through which she has passed :

A most extracting frenzy of mine own

From my remembrance clearly banish'd his.

The Clown and Fabian enter. The former bears Malvolio's letter to Olivia. Fabian reads the letter. The experiences through which Malvolio has passed have brought him to his senses. The letter complains of his ill-treatment from Olivia, and from her *drunken cousin*. It is so sensible that the Duke says:

This savours not much of distraction.

Olivia orders Fabian to

See him delivered, . . . ; bring him hither.

As soon as Fabian makes his exit to execute this order the Main Action of the drama is resumed. Olivia turns to the Duke:

My lord, so please you, these things further thought on,  
To think me as well a sister as a wife,  
One day shall crown the alliance on't so please you  
Here at my house and at my proper cost.

The Duke embraces the offer, and then, turning to Viola, discharges her from his service, and offers her his hand and heart in marriage:

Your master quits you ; and for your service done him,  
So much against the mettle of your sex,  
So far beneath your soft and tender breeding,  
And since you call'd me master for so long,  
Here is my hand : you shall from this time be  
Your master's mistress.

Olivia now accepts Viola as a sister.

Again the Main Action gives way to a Sub-Action. Thus, with perfect dramatic technique, is Shakespeare taking up, one after another, the actions of this drama, and bringing them to a fitting completion. Fabian enters with Malvolio. In very strong, though courteous language, Malvolio protests against Olivia's treatment:

Madam, you have done me wrong,  
Notorious wrong.

Nothing has been further from Olivia's purpose. Conscious of her kindly intentions she is nonplussed. Malvolio reiterates his charge, and says:

. . . Pray you, peruse that letter.

This was Maria's *obscure epistle of love*. Malvolio challenges Olivia to deny the authorship of the letter. Olivia's insight was keen. She immediately divines the cause of the mischief:

. . . 't is Maria's hand.



This is a comedy. It must end happily. Fabian speaks:

And let no quarrel nor no brawl to come  
Taint the condition of this present hour.

He then confesses frankly that he, Sir Toby, and Maria had conceived and executed this trick upon Malvolio.

Comedy portrays those frailties which are venial, laughable; those which awaken in the spectator not derision or wrath, but kindly mirth. Shakespeare's comedies are never satirical or sarcastic. This is true of all the comic characters in this play. Fabian expresses this thought when he characterizes the whole Malvolio episode as being more laughable than revengeful:

How with a sportful malice it was follow'd,  
May rather pluck on laughter than revenge.

Olivia accepts the explanation, and kindly, yet firmly, says to Malvolio:

Alas, poor fool, how have they baffled thee!

The Clown frankly acknowledges his share in the whole affair, and then comments:

And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.

This is true of human life. It is, and of necessity must be, also true of a drama, which is a portrayal of human life. In the latter it is called Poetic Justice. Malvolio's excessive vanity has produced its

normal fruit. It has brought on him these indignities. He has not, however, sufficient mental strength to recognize that fact. He retires disgruntled, and threatening vengeance:

I 'll be revenged on the whole pack of you.

Of all in the play he alone at the conclusion is not jovial and happy. In closing his dramatic life in such an unhappy frame of mind Shakespeare manifests perfect Poetic Justice. But even Malvolio's discomfiture and unhappiness must not be allowed to mar the happy conclusion of the play. Olivia expresses some sympathy for him:

He hath been most notoriously abused.

To that the Duke, in a kindly and conciliatory spirit, adds:

Pursue him and entreat him to a peace.

Nothing now remains for the poet to do but to bring to a happy ending the dramatic lives of the characters in the Main Action. This is done in the last words spoken by the Duke:

A solemn combination shall be made  
Of our dear souls. Meantime, sweet sister,  
We will not part from hence. Cesario, come ;  
For so you shall be, while you are a man ;  
But when in other habits you are seen,  
Orsino's mistress and his fancy's queen.

The play began with a request for music. It is pervaded by a lyrical element. It concludes with

a song. Thus the beginning and the end of the play Complement and Balance each other. The song with which the play ends gives expression to much profound and philosophic thought. It is an Epilogue. In it human life is epitomized. The Clown reviews a human life from its beginning, when one is *a little tiny boy*, through *man's estate*, and married life, until man reaches old age, and comes *unto his bed*. The refrain of the song is:

For the rain it raineth every day.

And yet, while there is, as this signifies, a certain amount of storm in every human life, so is there also of sunshine. Olivia had her bereavements; Viola and Sebastian were shipwrecked and separated; the Duke was unsuccessful in his effort to win Olivia; Sir Toby and Sir Andrew had broken pates; still to all of them Fate was kind, and their lives ended happily.

Thus the play ends, but the action does not stop.

The Duke's messenger is pursuing Malvolio, and entreating him to a peace. Malvolio

. . . hath not told us of the captain yet.

The nuptials of the Duke and Viola, of Olivia and Sebastian, are to be celebrated. So that artistic unfinish, which characterizes every great work of art, is manifested in this lovely comedy.

## CHAPTER VII

### OTHELLO

#### INTRODUCTION

##### I

IT is a mistake, both of students of history and of the drama, to study the past in the light of the present, and to judge alien societies by the standard of social conditions existing in one's native land. A great drama must be studied in the light of the time and place the life of which it portrays. The time of this play was the Renaissance, the scene of it the Venetian Republic. Life then and there differed much from that of the present time, in this land. Some of those differences Taine has eloquently described. In his essay on *Napoleon*, whose ancestors were Italian, he says:

With us several centuries of police and courts of justice, of social discipline and peaceful habits, of hereditary civilization, have diminished the force and violence of the passions natural to man ; in Italy, in the Renaissance epoch, they were still intact : human emotions at that time were keener and more profound than at the present day : the appetites were more ardent and more unbridled ; man's will was more impetuous and more tenacious ; whatever motive inspired him, whether

pride, ambition, jealousy, hatred, love, envy or sensuality, the inward spring strained with an energy and relaxed with a violence, that has now disappeared.

It is life existing in such an environment that Shakespeare portrays in this great drama. In studying it we must, in imagination, place ourselves in that environment, and from such a point of view see and judge the personages and actions.

The play begins with a conversation between two men. This is held at night, in a street of Venice. These men are nominal friends. Roderigo has such unquestioning confidence in Iago's friendship that he had placed his purse at Iago's service. He is reproaching Iago for having concealed from him the knowledge of something which has taken place, and of which he, Iago, is cognizant :

Tush ! never tell me ; I take it much unkindly  
That thou, Iago, who hast had my purse  
As if the strings were thine, shouldst know of this.

Iago vehemently denies the accusation :

'Sblood, but you will not hear me;  
If ever I did dream of such a matter,  
Abhor me.

What is *this* to which Roderigo alludes, and of which Iago, with so much warmth, professes entire ignorance ? Shakespeare does not, at this time, inform us. He makes what is simply an allusion, a vague hint, and then introduces another subject. What is the purpose of this ? By so doing he has, with

the first words of the play, awakened the curiosity, stimulated the interest of the spectator. By not immediately satisfying this curiosity he intensifies it. This is masterly technique.

The conversation is continued without any interruption, and we are informed of another fact of the utmost importance; *viz.*, the principal motive which actuates Iago in all he does in this drama:

Thou told'st me thou didst hold him in thy hate.

Iago responds:

Despise me, if I do not.

Again Shakespeare gives only an intimation of the truth. To whom does Roderigo refer by *him*? We are not informed until later.

Iago then proceeds to give in detail the reasons for his hatred of this man. Three of his friends, of high position and great influence, besought this person, whose identity has not yet been revealed, to appoint Iago his lieutenant. This request was haughtily refused. Michael Cassio, a Florentine, had been chosen.

He, in good time, must his lieutenant be,  
And I—God bless the mark!—his Moorship's ancient.  
We are now, for the first time, informed that the object of Iago's hate is the Moor.

After making these statements Iago says to Roderigo:

Now, sir, be judge yourself,  
Whether I in any just term am affined  
To love the Moor.



Roderigo responds:

I would not follow him then.

Iago follows him but to make use of him:

In following him, I follow but myself ;  
Heaven is my judge, not I for love and duty,  
But seeming so, for my peculiar end:  
For when my outward action doth demonstrate  
The native act and figure of my heart  
In compliment extern, 't is not long after  
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
For daws to peck at : I am not what I am.

In this conversation Shakespeare has revealed to us Iago, his character, his motives, his purposes. He is a consummate hypocrite, an irredeemable villain. He is a perfect example of "the corrupt Italian intellect of the Renaissance."<sup>1</sup>

Roderigo now returns to the subject referred to in the opening lines of the play:

What a full fortune does the thick-lips owe,  
If he can carry 't thus !

Iago advises:

Call up her father,  
Rouse him.

Both go to Brabantio's house, and awake him. Brabantio appears at the window. Iago addresses him:

<sup>1</sup> Lowell, *Old English Dramatists*, p. 76.

Zounds, sir, you 're robb'd ; for shame, put on your gown.

Brabantio recognizes Roderigo, to whom he says:

I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors :  
In honest plainness thou hast heard me say  
My daughter is not for thee ; and now, in madness,  
Being full of supper and distempering draughts,  
Upon malicious bravery, dost thou come  
To start my quiet.

From these words of Brabantio we now, for the first time, learn that Roderigo is a rejected suitor of Brabantio's daughter. The cause of Roderigo's hatred to Othello is revealed. He had failed where Othello had been successful.

To Brabantio's rebuke Roderigo responds:

Do not believe  
That, from the sense of all civility,  
I thus would play and trifle with your reverence :  
Your daughter, if you have not given her leave,  
I say again, hath made a gross revolt ;  
Tying her duty, beauty, wit and fortunes  
In an extravagant and wheeling stranger  
Of here and every where.

Brabantio, thoroughly alarmed, arouses his people. He has had a dream which forebodes trouble. Shakespeare thus lightly touches the emotional chord that vibrates through the drama.

Brabantio withdraws into his house. Iago and Roderigo are left alone. Then Iago makes a statement to Roderigo, the dramatic purpose of which is:

I.—To reveal again Iago's motives and purposes.

II.—To inform the spectator of the drama of the Cyprus wars, and that Othello has been selected to lead the Venetian forces.

III.—That Othello was a great commander.

Iago says:

Farewell ; for I must leave you : *seq.*

He then retires. Brabantio and his servants enter. He addresses Roderigo, and in the conversation which follows we are, for the first time, definitely and distinctly informed of that to which Roderigo referred in the opening lines of the play ; *viz.*, the marriage of Othello and Desdemona.

It is too true an evil : gone she is ;

. . . . .

With the Moor, say'st thou ?

. . . . .

Are they married, think you ?

Roderigo answers :

Truly, I think they are.

Thus, like the sun, which does not rise suddenly or full-orbed, but slowly, and gradually dissipates the darkness of the night, so does Shakespeare gradually inform us of the circumstances which have caused the action of the drama.

Brabantio once more refers to Roderigo's rejected suit of Desdemona :

O, would you had had her !

Brabantio and his servants, led by Roderigo, then start to seek Othello and Desdemona.

Iago, who had left Roderigo and gone to seek the Moor, found him. Scene 2 opens with a conversation between them. This is the first appearance of Othello. This conversation is held on the same night, in another street of Venice. Othello and Iago are surrounded by the former's attendants. They carry torches. The grouping is very effective. A drama is written to be acted. When studying it this fact must constantly be borne in mind.

Iago, of whose character some revelation has been made in the first Scene, now further manifests his heartless duplicity. He tells Othello he has been restrained from killing some one by his conscience, which is very sensitive:

Though in the trade of war I have slain men,  
Yet do I hold it very stuff o' the conscience  
To do no contrived murder : I lack iniquity  
Sometimes to do me service : nine or ten times  
I had thought to have yerked him here under the ribs.

To whom does Iago refer ? Shakespeare does not tell us. Thus again he appeals to the curiosity, awakens the interest, of the spectator.

The first words of Othello reveal him to be a man conscious of his own rectitude, calm, courageous:

'T is better as it is.

Iago proceeds to tell Othello of the *scurvy and provoking terms* which the magnifico, Brabantio, spake against him. He then inquires:

But, I pray you, sir,  
Are you fast married?

and warns him:

Be assured of this,  
 . . . . .  
 . . . he will divorce you ;  
 Or put upon you what restraint and grievance  
 The law, with all his might to enforce it on,  
 Will give him cable.

Othello speaks. He tells Iago, and in so doing informs the spectators of the drama, about himself, his services to the Republic of Venice, his lineage, his love for Desdemona, which alone induced him to marry her:

Let him do his spite ;  
 My services which I have done the signiory  
 Shall out-tongue his complaints. 'T is yet to know,—  
 . . . . .  
 . . . I fetch my life and being  
 From men of royal siege, and my demerits  
 May speak unbonneted to as proud a fortune  
 As this that I have reach'd : for know, Iago,  
 But that I love the gentle Desdemona,  
 I would not my unhoused free condition  
 Put into circumscription and confine  
 For the sea's worth.

A crowd, with torches, approaches. Iago suspects it is Brabantio and his friends, led by Roderigo. He advises Othello to seek shelter. Othello instantly and firmly refuses:

Not I ; I must be found :  
 My parts, my title and my perfect soul  
 Shall manifest me rightly.

Iago was mistaken. The company approaching was composed of Cassio and some Officers. We have been informed by Iago that Cassio had been appointed by Othello his lieutenant. Now Cassio appears, bringing a message from the Duke to Othello :

The duke does greet you, general,  
 And he requires your haste-post-haste appearance,  
 Even on the instant.

Othello retires into the house to *spend* (speak) a word. In Othello's absence Iago informs Cassio of Othello's marriage, of which Cassio professes entire ignorance. He, however, knew of it, as Othello later informs us, *from first to last*. That knowledge Cassio considered confidential, and, therefore, he pretended ignorance.

Othello, a moment later, returns. Directly thereafter Brabantio, Roderigo, and Officers, with torches and weapons, enter, seeking Othello. This is effective Grouping.

*On one side :*

Othello, Iago, attendants. Cassio, Officers. All armed, and bearing torches.

*On other side :*

Brabantio, Roderigo, Officers, attendants bearing torches, and with drawn weapons.

Brabantio's grief and rage are almost uncontrollable. He insults Othello. All except Othello draw their swords. He says :



Hold your hands,  
Both you of my inclining, and the rest :  
Were it my cue to fight, I should have known it  
Without a prompter.

Othello informs Brabantio that messengers from the Duke

are here about my side,  
Upon some present business of the state  
To bring me to him.

The First Officer confirms this, and adds :

The duke's in council, and your noble self,  
I am sure, is sent for.

The whole party then retire to seek the Duke, and the Scene ends.

The action of the drama is now transferred to the council-chamber of the republic. Seated around a table are the Duke, Senators, Officers of the State. The subject of the conference, which has been hastily called, is the threatened attack of the Turk upon Cyprus. A Turkish fleet, which one report says is composed of one hundred and seven galleys, another of one hundred and forty, another of two hundred, is

. . . bearing up to Cyprus.

A sailor enters with later news :

The Turkish preparation makes for Rhodes.

Still another Messenger enters hurriedly, and brings information from Signior Montano, the commander of the Venetian forces at Cyprus :

The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,  
Steering with due course towards the isle of Rhodes,  
Have there injoined them with an after fleet.

At this moment Brabantio, Othello, Iago, Rodrigo, and Officers enter. The Duke says:

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you  
Against the general enemy Ottoman.

Brabantio, responding to the Duke's greeting, speaks of that matter which has brought him to the council-chamber:

My daughter! O, my daughter!

The Duke promises him redress. Brabantio informs the council that the man who has injured him is the Moor. The members of the council express their regret. Brabantio now briefly describes his daughter:

A maiden never bold;  
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion  
Blush'd at herself.

The dramatic purpose of this description is twofold; to inform the spectator about Desdemona, and to prepare for her entrance.

Brabantio then draws the conclusion that a woman like Desdemona, of gentle birth, could not have married a man like Othello, of tawny skin, thick lips, unless she had been bewitched. Othello speaks:

I do beseech you,  
Send for the lady to the Sagittary,  
And let her speak of me before her father :

. . . . .  
And, till she come, as truly as to heaven  
I do confess the vices of my blood,  
So justly to your grave ears I 'll present  
How I did thrive in this fair lady's love,  
And she in mine.

He relates

. . . the story of my life,  
From year to year, the battles, sieges, fortunes,  
That I have pass'd.

Thus Desdemona was won :

She loved me for the dangers I had pass'd,  
And I loved her that she did pity them.

Desdemona, for whose appearance Shakespeare has made such ample preparations by informing us about her and her marriage, now enters. Her father addresses her :

Come hither, gentle mistress :  
Do you perceive in all this noble company  
Where most you owe obedience ?

Desdemona is loyal to her husband. She replies :

And so much duty as my mother show'd  
To you, preferring you before her father,  
So much I challenge that I may profess  
Due to the Moor my lord.

The Duke advises Brabantio to bear his loss philosophically.

To mourn a mischief that is past and gone  
Is the next way to draw new mischief on.

The robb'd that smiles steals something from the thief ;  
He robs himself that spends a bootless grief.

Brabantio wittily and ironically responds :

So let the Turk of Cyprus us beguile ;  
We lose it not, so long as we can smile.

The Duke now turns to Othello and informs him of the threatened attack of the Turks upon Cyprus, also that he has been chosen to defend the island. Thus by a transition which is unforced, perfectly natural, Shakespeare directs the attention of the spectator from Brabantio's grievance to the Turk. Shakespeare's technique here is in the highest degree artistic.

Othello accepts the command of the Venetian forces. He requests that Desdemona may accompany him. She reiterates this request. The Duke consents :

Be it as you shall privately determine,  
Either for her stay or going : the affair cries haste,  
And speed must answer it.

Othello is ordered to leave Venice that night. The Duke informs him his commission and Desdemona will be sent after him. Othello selects Iago as the officer to be intrusted with both.

Then occur the farewells. Although apparently of slight importance, they possess the greatest dramatic significance.

*First Sen.* Adieu, brave Moor ; use Desdemona well.

*Bra.* Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see :  
She has deceived her father, and may thee.

In both these remarks the action of the drama is vividly foreshadowed. All retire except Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Roderigo. Othello responds to Brabantio's warning :

My life upon her faith !

Then turning to Iago, he says :

Honest Iago,  
My Desdemona must I leave to thee :  
I prithee, let thy wife attend on her ;  
And bring them after in the best advantage.

Othello and Desdemona now retire. Roderigo and Iago are left alone. The last conversation in the Introduction, like the first, is between them. In it Shakespeare makes them reveal once more, and still more clearly, their inmost thoughts and feelings, the secret springs of all their actions. Roderigo, the discarded suitor of Desdemona, says :

I will incontinently drown myself.

Iago responds :

Why, thou silly gentleman !

Roderigo replies :

It is silliness to live when to live is torment ; and then have we a prescription to die when death is our physician.

Iago expresses the utmost contempt for such opinions :

Ere I would say, I would drown myself for the love of a guinea-hen, I would change my humanity with a baboon.

As flowers are ruined by a killing frost, so Roderigo's better nature is blighted by Iago's cynical disbelief in virtue and love :

What should I do ? I confess it is my shame to be so fond ; but it is not in my virtue to amend it.

Iago perceives he has Roderigo completely under his influence. He professes anew his friendship for him :

I could never better stead thee than now,  
and then proceeds :

Put money in thy purse ; . . . if sanctimony and a frail vow betwixt an erring barbarian and a super-subtle Venetian be not too hard for my wits and all the tribe of hell, thou shalt enjoy her.

Nothing in all literature is more selfish, cynical, heartless, treacherous, envenomed, than this advice of Iago to Roderigo. The result of the conversation is :

*Rod.* I am changed : I 'll go sell all my land.

Iago, who is the Complicating force, who dominates the first half of the play, is now left alone. In



a soliloquy, with which the Introduction ends, he reveals his motives and methods, and in so doing foreshadows the action of the drama.

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse ; *seq.*

Iago has two motives: *I hate the Moor; To get [Cassio's] place.*

These purposes constitute his *double knavery*. How does he carry them into execution?

I have 't. It is engender'd. Hell and night  
Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light.

The Introduction of a drama is expository, narrative. Like the rising sun it is light-giving. This Introduction is a masterpiece. In it

I.—All the principal characters are introduced. Iago, Othello, Cassio, Roderigo, Desdemona, appear in person. Emilia is referred to by Othello, when he said to Iago:

I prithee, let thy wife attend on her.

Of all these persons, with the exception of Cassio and Emilia, the fundamental traits, salient features, are clearly revealed.

II.—All necessary information as to the causes of the action of the drama have been given. Those causes were:

(a.) Rejection by Othello of Iago's request for the Lieutenancy, and selection of Cassio for that position.

(*b.*) Unsuccessful suit of Roderigo for Desdemona's hand.

(*c.*) Marriage of Othello and Desdemona.

III.—The emotional chord that vibrates through the play, and which is tragic, is touched:

(*a.*) The unhappiness of Brabantio, which is caused by his daughter's elopement and marriage.

(*b.*) The war between Venice and Turkey.

IV.—The Main Action of the drama is clearly foreshadowed:

After some time, to abuse Othello's ear,  
That he [Cassio] is too familiar with his wife.

The action of the drama takes place at Cyprus. When the Venetian fleet bearing Othello, Desdemona, Iago, Cassio, and others, sails for Cyprus, the Growth, or second division of the drama, begins.

## GROWTH

### II

The play we are studying is a tragedy. The action is carried forward by six persons, four men, two women. Of these, two, Cassio, Iago, are severely wounded; four, Desdemona, Emilia, Roderigo, Othello, meet violent deaths. It is therefore very artistic, and manifests fine technique on Shakespeare's part, that the action of a drama which ends so tragically should be ushered in with a storm.

As the lovely lake reflects the flowers and trees on its border, the clouds in the sky above it, so Nature reflects the varying moods of human thought and

emotion. The storms and tempests of the ocean but typify what Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra* describes as those *greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report, viz.*, those that rage in the human breast.

The action of the drama commences with the sailing of the Venetian fleet from Venice to Cyprus, to defend that place against the threatened attack of the Turks. As the fleet approaches Cyprus a violent storm is raging. With a description of it Shakespeare begins the Growth of this play. Standing on the shore are Montano, the Venetian Governor of the island, and two Gentlemen. Montano says:

A fuller blast ne'er shook our battlements.

He asks the question :

What shall we hear of this ?

To this a second Gentleman replies :

A segregation [disintegration, breaking up] of the Turkish fleet.

This is most suggestive. Its dramatic purport will be apparent in a little while.

This second Gentleman then, and more in detail, describes the tempest. Montano responds with another allusion to the destruction of the Turkish fleet. A third Gentleman now enters, and states that the destruction of the Turkish fleet, which, heretofore, has been a surmise, is an actual fact :

News, lads ! our wars are done.

The desperate tempest hath so bang'd the Turks,  
That their designment halts : *seq.*

Why has Shakespeare destroyed this fleet? This tragedy is not in scope international, as is *Henry V.*, which portrays the war between England and France. Nor is it national, as is *Richard III.*, which portrays the civil conflict that raged in England between the Houses of York and Lancaster. Rather it is domestic. The scene of it is the home of Othello. The war between the Turks and Venetians forms no part of the action of the drama. Shakespeare, therefore, at the very beginning of the action, causes the Turkish fleet to be wrecked and to disappear.

The arrival of a ship bearing Cassio is now announced. Anxiety as to the safety of the Moor is expressed. Montano, the Governor, incidentally pays a tribute to Othello's ability as a commander:

. . . the man commands  
Like a full [complete, perfect] soldier.

The dramatic purpose of this is to give the spectator further information regarding the hero of the play.

A moment later Cassio enters. Shortly after a ship is sighted, and guns are heard. While some have gone to learn what ship it is, and whom it brings, Montano asks Cassio:

But, good lieutenant, is your general wived ?

Cassio answers:

Most fortunately : he hath achieved a maid  
That paragon's description and wild fame.

A moment later he adds :

Tempests themselves, high seas and howling winds,  
The gutter'd rocks and congregated sands,—  
Traitors ensteep'd to clog the guiltless keel,—  
As having sense of beauty, do omit  
Their mortal natures, letting go safely by  
The divine Desdemona.

Shakespeare, by these remarks of Cassio, gives the spectator further information of Desdemona.

One quality of a great drama is, it must be self-explanatory. Shakespeare conforms to this canon of Art by these side-lights, thrown incidentally, indirectly, in conversation, upon the principal characters. *Othello commands like a full soldier ; Desdemona paragon's description and wild fame, is the divine Desdemona.*

The ship which has just arrived does not bring Othello, but Iago, Desdemona, Emilia, Roderigo. Desdemona is greeted by Cassio, and immediately inquires :

What tidings can you tell me of my lord ?

Guns are heard, and from within a shout, *A sail, a sail !* Cassio sends a Messenger for news. The ship seen is that bearing Othello. The guns heard are his greeting to the citadel. He does not, however, appear at once. Why ?

One great danger against which the dramatist must guard in writing this part of the drama is too

rapid progress of the Main Action. To avoid this danger Shakespeare now introduces an Episode. This consists of a bantering conversation between Iago on the one hand, and first Emilia, later Desdemona, on the other.

Cassio welcomes Iago, then Emilia, kissing her. As he does so, Iago says:

Sir, would she give you so much of her lips  
As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,  
You 'ld have enough.

Desdemona, who is attached to Emilia, checks him. Emilia herself chides him. Iago, who is *nothing if not critical*, continues:

Come on, come on ; you are pictures out of doors,  
Bells in your parlours, wild-cats in your kitchens,  
Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,  
Players in your housewifery, and housewives in your  
beds.

Emilia, as the subject of the conversation, is now dropped. She gives place to her mistress. Desdemona asks Iago:

What wouldst thou write of me, if thou shouldst praise  
me?

and then adds:

I am not merry ; but I do beguile  
The thing I am, by seeming otherwise.

This is one of Shakespeare's fine touches which manifest his art. In Desdemona's remark he again strikes the tragic chord that vibrates through the



play, and by so doing foreshadows the Catastrophe.

Iago, with some hesitancy and apparent reluctance, at last answers Desdemona's question:

If she be fair and wise, fairness and wit,  
The one's for use, the other useth it.

Desdemona then asks him for his opinion of a woman *black and witty*; Emilia, of one who is *fair and foolish*; Desdemona, of one *foul and foolish*, and finally: *But what praise couldst thou bestow on a deserving woman indeed?* Iago replies:

She that was ever fair and never proud, *seq.*

Desdemona is disgusted. She turns to Cassio and engages him in conversation. Iago reveals his secret thoughts and purposes in an *aside*. In so doing—and this is the dramatic purpose of this soliloquy—he unfolds his plan to ruin Cassio.

He takes her by the palm: ay, well said, whisper; with as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio: *seq.*

This Episode, having accomplished its purpose, *viz.*, prevention of too rapid progress of the Main Action, is brought to a close, and the action of the drama resumes movement. A trumpet sounds. Othello enters.

Shakespeare in this play manifests perfect Gradation. In Nature there is everywhere and always Gradation. The sounds of winds, waters, singing of birds, are not sharp, abrupt, but rise and fall with regular and measured crescendo and diminu-

endo. Colors shade gradually and harmoniously into one another. Tints of grasses, leaves, flowers; sunshine and shade; the colors in plumage of birds, the fur of animals, all blend. Two colors which do not blend are never put by the Creator next to each other. Between them are always shades of those colors. There are plains, hills, mountains. The extreme cold of winter is not immediately followed by the torrid heat of summer. Spring and autumn are between these two extremes of temperature. Based on these laws of Nature there is in Art a Law of Gradation.

In this play Shakespeare conforms to this canon of Art. At the beginning of the action he does not introduce the characters in the drama at once, or all together, but gradually, one following another. Nor does he introduce the most important characters first. They appear one following another in the order of their importance in the drama. First comes Cassio; then a group composed of Emilia, Roderigo, Iago, Desdemona. Finally, the hero, Othello, appears.

With Othello's entrance the movement of the action is resumed. The greetings of Othello and Desdemona are expressive of the truest and holiest love, and are described by Shakespeare in verses which are perfect. There is, however, in them, and this is most suggestive, an undercurrent of foreboding. Othello says:

It gives me wonder great as my content  
To see you here before me. . . .

. . . . .

. . . If it were now to die,  
 'T were now to be most happy ; for, I fear,  
 My soul hath her content so absolute  
 That not another comfort like to this  
 Succeeds in unknown fate.

Nor are these forebodings of ill groundless. Iago stands beside Othello and Desdemona. In an *aside*, he says:

O, you are well tuned now !  
 But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,  
 As honest as I am.

Othello once more announces: . . . *our wars are done, the Turks are drown'd*. He orders Iago:

Go to the bay and disembark my coffers.

Then he greets Desdemona again, and all make their exit except Iago and Roderigo.

No sooner are these two men alone than Iago reveals his plans to Roderigo, and solicits his assistance:

The lieutenant to-night watches on the court of guard:—first, I must tell thee this—Desdemona is directly in love with him.

Roderigo dissents, but Iago's domination over him is complete. Iago continues:

But, sir, be you ruled by me: I have brought you from Venice. Watch you to-night ; for the command I'll lay 't upon you. Cassio knows you not. I'll not be far from you: do you find some occasion to anger Cassio,

Roderigo assents, and retires. Iago is left alone. In a soliloquy he again reveals his secret motives, his devilish purposes:

That Cassio loves her, I do well believe it ; *seq.*

Very expressive, and very suggestive, is Shakespeare's iteration and reiteration that Iago hates Othello, and suspects him of being intimate with Emilia.

I have told thee often, and I re-tell thee again and again, I hate the Moor.

I hate the Moor ;

And it is thought abroad, that 'twixt my sheets  
He has done my office.

. . . . .  
For that I do suspect the lusty Moor  
Hath leap'd into my seat ; the thought whereof  
Doth, like a poisonous mineral, gnaw my inwards.

This subject is unpleasant. Why did Shakespeare wish, and so strenuously attempt, to impress it on the mind of the spectator ? Iago is a villain. He has no faith in man or woman ; in human goodness, virtue, love. His whole effort is to ruin those around him. Nearly every one of the other *dramatis personæ* become his victims. Owing to his knavery Cassio is cashiered, disgraced, wounded. Roderigo, Emilia, Desdemona, Othello, all are brought to their deaths by his malignity. In portraying a character so diabolical the dramatist is in danger of making the man so bad that he ceases to be human—becomes a monster, a fiend. The result

of so doing is, the sympathy, the interest, of the spectator are alienated. Shakespeare guards against this danger by giving Iago a reason for his malice. This reason is a suspicion that Othello has injured him. Shakespeare impresses this reason on the minds of the spectators by repeating it, in different forms, at different times. This is technically Dramatic Hedging.

The second Scene is episodic. It is devoted to the reading of a proclamation by a Herald *importing the mere perdition of the Turkish fleet*. In it Othello orders a general holiday,

from this present hour of five till the bell have told eleven,

to celebrate that event, and also his own nuptials.

In Scene 3 the action takes place at the castle, the official residence of the Venetian commander. Here are gathered Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, and attendants. Othello addresses Cassio:

Good Michael, look you to the guard to-night.

He adds a few words of gentle warning, wise counsel:

Let's teach ourselves that honourable stop,  
Not to outsport discretion.

In view of Cassio's conduct but an hour or two later this is profoundly suggestive. It is fine foreshadowing. Cassio responds:

Iago hath direction what to do;  
But, notwithstanding, with my personal eye  
Will I look to 't.

Othello expresses perfect confidence in Iago, who, he asserts, is *most honest*. This is not the first time he has done so. He thus reveals to us how completely he is deceived by Iago, and that he is in a suitable mental and emotional condition to be Iago's dupe.

Othello bids Cassio *good night*, and orders him to report early next morning. He, Desdemona, and attendants, retire. As they do so Iago enters, and he and Cassio are alone.

At the close of the first Scene of the Growth Iago in a soliloquy said:

I 'll have our Michael Cassio on the hip,

and then adds:

'T is here, but yet confused.

What he meant was that his plan was to abuse Cassio to Othello, but how to do so he had not definitely and accurately decided.

Iago is keen, quick, self-reliant. In executing his plan to ruin Cassio he determines to be guided by circumstances. As soon as he hears Othello's proclamation, allowing *full liberty of feasting*, he perceives his opportunity. He knows, no one better, that Cassio cannot drink without becoming quarrelsome. He will tempt him to drink, surround him with drunken men, and then provoke a quarrel. Poor Cassio yields. He does so against his wish and judgment.

I 'll do 't ; but it dislikes me.



Thus so soon after Othello's warning, Cassio does *outsport discretion*. He now retires. Iago is alone. He soliloquizes, and reveals, in detail, his plan:

If I can fasten but one cup upon him, *seq.*

Cassio re-enters with Montano and some gentlemen. He informs us they have been drinking. That fact is evident. When sober, Cassio is thoughtful, calm, kindly. Now he is profane, excited, foolish, quarrelsome. He has become maudlin drunk. He makes his exit. No sooner has he gone than Iago, metaphorically, stabs him in the back. To Montano he says:

You see this fellow that is gone before ;  
He is a soldier fit to stand by Cæsar  
And give direction : and do but see his vice ;

. . . . .  
I fear the trust Othello puts him in,  
On some odd time of his infirmity,  
Will shake this island.

Roderigo enters. Montano and Iago are conversing. Iago perceives this is his golden opportunity. Quick as lightning, in an *aside*, he says to Roderigo:

How now, Roderigo !  
I pray you, after the lieutenant ; go.

Roderigo obeys. He provokes a quarrel with Cassio.

Montano has not heard what Iago has said to Roderigo. He says, responding to Iago's statement to him:

And 't is great pity that the noble Moor  
Should hazard such a place as his own second  
With one of an ingraft infirmity :  
It were an honest action to say  
So to the Moor.

Roderigo now returns. He is pursued by Cassio, who assaults him. Othello, attracted by the noise of the disturbance, enters. Just as he does so Montano, who is trying to restrain Cassio, is wounded by him. Othello commands:

Hold, for your lives !

Iago reiterates the command. Othello rebukes the fighters; then turning to Iago, who assumes the mien of deepest sadness and regret, asks him the cause of the quarrel. Iago gives an evasive reply. Othello then asks Cassio for an explanation. Cassio, who has been sobered by the sad termination of his assault on Montano, says penitently:

I pray you, pardon me ; I cannot speak.

His shame and grief seal his lips. Othello then inquires of Montano. He pleads his wound, and refers Othello to Iago. Othello is angered. He demands peremptorily:

Iago, who began 't ?

Iago again manifests his diabolic craft. Under pretence of loving Cassio and wishing to save him, he stabs him in a vital part.

Touch me not so near : *seg.*

Othello accepts Iago's statements implicitly, and replies:

I know, Iago,  
Thy honesty and love doth mince this matter,  
Making it light to Cassio. Cassio, I love thee;  
But never more be officer of mine.

Desdemona enters. The quarrel has been so violent that even the ladies in the castle have been disturbed. To make this manifest, and also to make Cassio's discomfiture more complete, is the dramatic purpose of her entrance.

Othello, having gently but firmly cashiered Cassio, now orders Montano led off, and promises himself to be the surgeon to his hurts. Othello then retires with Desdemona.

The first part of Iago's fiendish plot, *to get Cassio's place, to*

. . . have our Michael Cassio on the hip, has been successfully accomplished. His hope and prediction have been realized:

If consequence do but approve my dream,  
My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream.

It has done so. Cassio is ruined. Iago has his lieutenantancy.

The remainder of the Act, and of this division of the drama, is principally episodic. It consists of two conversations; one between Iago and Cassio, one between Iago and Roderigo. Each of these conversations is succeeded by a soliloquy of Iago.

The former, that between Iago and Cassio, is a model of what dialogue in a drama should be. In it the characters of the speakers are perfectly revealed.

*Iago.* What, are you hurt, lieutenant? *seq.*

Cassio is ruined. Iago having accomplished that, which constitutes the first part of his satanic plot, now devotes his attention to the second part, *viz.*, the ruin of Othello and Desdemona. He proposes to use Cassio as the means by which he shall effect that.

The plan by which he hoped to ruin Othello, and which he had outlined before the action began, was:

After some time, to abuse Othello's ear  
That he [Cassio] is too familiar with his wife.

And as he again describes it after the action has begun:

. . . that I put the Moor  
At least into a jealousy so strong  
That judgement cannot cure.

He now begins to execute this plan. His effective instrument is the very man whom he has ruined. He says to Cassio:

I'll tell you what you shall do. Our general's wife is now the general: . . . confess yourself freely to her; importune her help to put you in your place again.

Cassio consents and retires. Iago then soliloquizes.

The reader must have noted how frequently in this play, more so than in most of his plays,

Shakespeare uses the soliloquy. Macbeth, Richard III., were both villains, murderers. Both reached the thrones they occupied by wading through blood. In this respect they are like Iago. Yet, in their cases, Shakespeare uses but few soliloquies, and these very brief, while Iago constantly, and, *in extenso*, soliloquizes. Why this difference? Because between Macbeth and Richard III. on the one hand, and Iago on the other, there is a radical difference. They accomplished their ends by means that were mostly open, undisguised, straightforward. Iago works not openly, but, like the mole, almost wholly underground, secretly. He trusts to deception to accomplish his purpose. He had distinctly announced that in the opening Scene of the play.

For when my outward action doth demonstrate  
The native act and figure of my heart  
In compliment extern, 't is not long after  
But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
For daws to peck at : I am not what I am.

It is an indispensable requisite of a drama, as I have before stated, that it be self-explanatory. Shakespeare, therefore, must inform the spectator of Iago's motives, methods. This he does by means of Iago's soliloquies. Had he not done so the spectator would have been as much deceived by Iago's professed purity and goodness of motive and apparent kindness of deed as were Cassio, Othello, and Desdemona.

Iago begins the soliloquy which follows Cassio's

exit by saying *the advice* he gives is *probal to thinking*, i. e., it will on reflection seem to be probable. He reasons with himself that his advice to Cassio is the best for Cassio. While Iago is a hypocrite, he does not deliberately attempt to deceive himself. In the latter part of this soliloquy he frankly confesses his diabolical plot to ruin, not only Othello, but also the innocent and lovely Desdemona:

And what 's he then that says I play the villain? *seq.*

In this soliloquy Shakespeare reveals to us the second part of the action, which culminates in the Climax.

While Iago is still speaking to himself Roderigo enters. He is disgusted with his part in the conspiracy to ruin Cassio and Desdemona. His money is spent; he has been cudgelled. Iago at first counsels patience; later, he cavalierly dismisses him.

By the mass, 't is morning ;

. . . . .

Retire thee ; go where thou art billeted :

Away, I say ; thou shalt know more hereafter :

Nay, get thee gone.

There is a radical change in Iago's words and attitude towards Roderigo. Why ? Roderigo was the tool he used to ruin Cassio. That ruin having been effected, Iago arrogantly, in fact insultingly, dismisses Roderigo. Having done so, Iago devotes all his energies to compassing the ruin of Othello and Desdemona. In a very few words, uttered in soliloquy, he unfolds his plan :



Two things are to be done :  
 My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress ;  
 I 'll set her on ;  
 Myself the while to draw the Moor apart,  
 And bring him jump when he may Cassio find  
 Soliciting his wife : ay, that 's the way :  
 Dull not device by coldness and delay.

When Iago begins to execute this plan the Climax, or third division, of the drama commences.

## CLIMAX

## III

A tragedy can be constructed in either one of two ways. By one method a drama portrays a deed and its reaction. The hero, by his own inherent power, by a powerful and perverted will manifesting itself in deeds, causes the action to move forward to the Climax, after which a reaction ensues, and the hero becomes the victim, suffers the consequences of his own conduct. An example of this kind of a tragedy is *Macbeth*. Macbeth was ambitious to become king of Scotland. His ambition was uncontrollable, murderous. He waded through seas of blood to seize the throne. He was successful. But even when successful, when seated on the throne, he said :

To be thus is nothing ;  
 But to be safely thus.

That he never was. What in the Greek drama was known as Nemesis, in the modern as Poetic Justice,

from this time forth controls Macbeth's fate. He himself expresses it:

. . . even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips.

Notwithstanding Macbeth's most persistent and powerful efforts to escape the retribution of his crimes, propelled by a power outside of himself he moves forward slowly, surely, with unvacillating step, to a violent death.

By the other method of constructing a drama the hero in the fore part of the play is portrayed as being passive, controlled by external influences. These eventually enkindle in him an overpowering passion. Under the influence of this his will becomes excited, masterful. He begins a course of conduct that decides his fate, and leads to the Catastrophe of the drama. An example of that kind of construction is the play we are studying. During that part of it that precedes the acme of the Climax, Othello, the hero, is passive. He is the victim of Iago's duplicity, knavery. By Iago he is

. . . as tenderly . . . led by the nose  
As asses are.

After the Climax has been reached Othello asserts himself. From this time he dominates the action of the drama, and causes the Catastrophe.

Iago's work is twofold: first, to overthrow Cassio; second, to ruin Othello. The portrayal of the first is the subject of the Growth. The second is the

subject of the Climax. In the Climax Iago puts Othello

. . . into a jealousy so strong  
That judgement cannot cure.

The French critics say, "The drama is preparation"; *i. e.*, in a perfectly constructed drama there must be constant and lucid foreshadowing. In this play Shakespeare conforms perfectly to this canon of dramatic Art. Iago in his soliloquy at the end of the Introduction outlines his plans. After stating he hates the Moor, and wishes to get Cassio's place, he says:

How, how?—Let's see:—  
After some time, to abuse Othello's ear  
That he is too familiar with his wife.

At the conclusion of the Growth, after Cassio has been cashiered, Iago again soliloquizes, and again, and more in detail, reveals his plans for the ruin of Othello:

Two things are to be done:  
My wife must move for Cassio to her mistress;  
. . . . .  
Myself the while to draw the Moor apart,  
And bring him jump when he may Cassio find  
Soliciting his wife.

In these two soliloquies, Shakespeare foreshadows clearly what is done in the Climax of this drama.

Not immediately, however, does Shakespeare make Iago begin his work. It was a custom among

the Venetians to greet a bride and groom, on the morning after marriage, with music. Shakespeare avails himself of this usage to begin the Climax with an Episode full of music and humor. His purpose in so doing is to make more impressive and more tragic the ruin of Othello. As in Nature the gathering clouds and rolling thunder are more sombre because of preceding sunshine; as in human life disappointment and sorrow are made more acute by the happiness which immediately precedes them; so in a drama, which is a transcript of human life, the tragic becomes more pathetic and impressive when preceded by the gay and humorous. This is known in Art as the Principle of Contrast. Of it Shakespeare was a master. His plays are full of brilliant examples of it. The humorous graveyard Scene in *Hamlet* immediately precedes the pathetic funeral of Ophelia, the tragic deaths of the Queen, King, Laertes, Hamlet. The Clown brings to Cleopatra

. . . the pretty worm of Nilus  
That kills and pains not.

Before she puts it to her breast he engages with her in a bantering, humorous conversation. In like manner Shakespeare begins the Climax of this play, which is to the last degree pathetic and tragic, with music and humor.

Cassio and musicians enter. Cassio instructs them where to play. The Clown enters. He says:

Why, masters, have your instruments been in Naples, that they speak i' the nose thus?

After he good-naturedly makes fun of them the musicians retire. In the same spirit he addresses Cassio. Cassio's distress, however, is too acute, his eagerness to retrieve himself is too great, to prolong the conversation.

The dramatic purpose for which Shakespeare has introduced this merriment having been accomplished, the action of the drama resumes movement. Cassio sends the Clown to Emilia:

If the gentlewoman that attends the general's wife be stirring, tell her there's one Cassio entreats her a little favour of speech: wilt thou do this?

No sooner has the Clown gone on this mission than Iago enters. Cassio informs him what he has done. Iago promises to aid him, and retires. Cassio expresses his unquestioning confidence in him:

I never knew

A Florentine more kind and honest.

Shakespeare again, as frequently, makes the characters in the play express unbounded confidence in Iago. We know he is a villain. How? Surely not from his actions. To those by whom he is surrounded those actions are apparently good and kindly, and prompted by the best of motives. Our knowledge of his villainy is derived not so much from his conduct, as from his soliloquies, which reveal the diabolic motives that prompt him, the ruin which he purposes. This fact must constantly be borne in mind in studying the play.

Emilia has received Cassio's message. She enters, and says:

Good morrow, good lieutenant : I am sorry  
For your displeasure ; but all will sure be well: *seq.*

Cassio beseeches Emilia to secure for him an interview with Desdemona. She promises so to do, and takes him with her into the castle, where he would be likely to see Desdemona. So ends the first Scene of the Climax.

The second Scene is simply an Episode. Othello sends letters to the senate of Venice, and then he, Iago, and Gentlemen, walk on the fortifications of Cyprus, and inspect them.

The first Scene had ended with Emilia's promise to Cassio to secure for him an interview with Desdemona. The third Scene opens with a description of that interview. In reply to Cassio's pleadings Desdemona says:

You do love my lord :

You have known him long ; and be you well assured  
He shall in strangeness stand no further off  
Than in a politic distance.

As Cassio retires, Othello and Iago enter. They both see him. Iago has successfully accomplished part of his plan, *viz.*,

And bring [Othello] jump when he may Cassio find  
Soliciting his wife.

He immediately improves his opportunity. He insinuates, apparently in the most guileless, really in the most crafty manner, his suspicions that Cassio

is too familiar with his [Othello's] wife.



Desdemona, innocent, frank, immediately begins to plead for Cassio.

How now, my lord !  
I have been talking with a suitor here,  
A man that languishes in your displeasure.

Othello hesitates, Desdemona urges:

When shall he come ?  
Tell me, Othello : I wonder in my soul,  
What you would ask me, that I should deny,  
Or stand so mammering on. What ! Michael Cassio,  
That came a-wooing with you, and so many a time,  
When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,  
Hath ta'en your part ; to have so much to do  
To bring him in !

Desdemona's appeal is beautiful, touching. Cassio erred not through cunning, but good-natured weakness; he is humbled, penitent; he was your friend when you wooed me, he pleaded for you. Othello yields. He requests Desdemona to withdraw. She and Emilia do so.

Iago's insinuations, Desdemona's pleading for Cassio, are two influences which, in Othello's disturbed and suspicious frame of mind, are to the last degree unsettling. In a brief soliloquy Othello describes the change taking place in his feelings towards Desdemona.

Excellent wretch ! <sup>1</sup> Perdition catch my soul,  
But I do love thee ! and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.

<sup>1</sup> *Wretch* : In Elizabethan English this word was sometimes, as here, used as a term of endearment, tenderness.

Iago now most insidiously inquires of Othello:

Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,  
Know of your love?

This further unsettles Othello. He becomes almost frantic. He insists on Iago's speaking fully and frankly. The more Othello becomes excited and insists, the more Iago craftily conceals his duplicity by assuming the character of a good man, a sincere friend. He is afraid to state in words his suspicions of Cassio because it is dangerous and wicked to trifle with any man's good name.

Good name in man and woman, dear my lord,  
Is the immediate jewel of their souls :  
Who steals my purse steals trash ; 't is something, nothing ;  
'T was mine, 't is his, and has been slave to thousands ;  
But he that filches from me my good name  
Robs me of that which not enriches him  
And makes me poor indeed.

In all the play there is no greater proof of Iago's thoroughly perverted, irredeemably wicked nature, than this apostrophe to a good name. It is a confirmation of what Antonio, speaking of Shylock, says to Bassanio :

An evil soul, producing holy witness,  
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,  
A goodly apple rotten at the heart.

When Othello becomes still more urgent to know Iago's thoughts Iago fiendishly cautions him against jealousy :

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy ;  
 It is the green-eyed monster which doth mock  
 The meat it feeds on : that cuckold lives in bliss  
 Who, certain of his fate, loves not his wronger ;  
 But O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
 Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves !

This accurately describes the condition into which  
 Othello is rapidly passing; he

. . . dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves !  
 and, as a consequence,

. . . O, what damned minutes tells he o'er.

Othello, as Iago at the very beginning of the play has informed us, is *of a free and open nature*, is naturally unsuspicious, confiding; also, he is a man not of thought but of action. He is now on the brink of ruin. Before taking the final plunge he draws back. There is a reaction in his feelings. He says to Iago:

Why, why is this? *seq.*

Othello's suspicions become so strong that they begin to take the form of action.

. . . to be once in doubt  
 Is once to be resolved.

Iago now further intensifies Othello's suspicions by using an unanswerable argument, *viz.*, Desdemona in the past has been deceitful:

She did deceive her father, marrying you.

Before the action began Brabantio had warned Othello :

Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see :  
She has deceived her father, and may thee.

Iago adds, she deceived not only her father but also you :

And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,  
She loved them most.

These references by Iago to Desdemona's deception of her father and husband produce a profound effect on Othello. Although he denies it his spirits are *a little dash'd*, he is *mov'd*. Iago refers to it. Othello faintly denies it. The poison has penetrated Othello's vitals. Iago perceives this, and retires. Othello, who is left alone, soliloquizes :

Why did I marry ? *seq.*

Iago suddenly returns, ostensibly for the purpose of warning Othello not to be hasty, either in forming a judgment, or taking action, but really for the purpose of still further intensifying Othello's suspicions. Having done so Iago again retires. Othello is completely deceived.

This fellow 's of exceeding honesty,  
And knows all qualities, with a learned spirit,  
Of human dealings. . . .

. . . . .  
. . . I am abused ; and my relief  
Must be to loathe her. . . .

. . . I had rather be a toad,

And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,  
Than keep a corner in the thing I love  
For others' uses.

Desdemona and Emilia enter. Desdemona is loyal and innocent. Her *passions are made of nothing but the finest parts of pure love*. When Othello now sees her his love triumphs over his suspicions:

If she be false, O, then heaven mocks itself !  
I 'll not believe 't.

Shakespeare causes the change that is being wrought in Othello's feelings to take place gradually. Like the rising tide of the ocean, the waves of which advance, recede, then advance again still higher, so Othello's suspicions are excited, then allayed as his old love for Desdemona re-asserts itself, yet all the while that love is growing fainter, those suspicions stronger, and more harrowing. Shakespeare's technique in this is very artistic, powerfully dramatic.

Othello conceals from Desdemona his suspicions and his anguish, by pleading a pain in his forehead. She attempts to bind his forehead with her handkerchief. Othello pushes the handkerchief from him. It falls. They then retire. Desdemona in her perplexity and distress does not notice she has dropped the handkerchief. Emilia who saw her drop it, picks it up. She gives it to Iago. She has misgivings. She asks:

What will you do with 't, that you have been so earnest  
To have me filch it?

Iago snatches it. Emilia pleads with him to return it:

If it be not for some purpose of import,  
Give 't me again : poor lady, she 'll run mad  
When she shall lack it.

Iago orders her to say nothing about it, and then to go, *leave me*. Emilia thus has unwittingly aided her husband to ruin Othello and Desdemona.

As soon as he is alone Iago soliloquizes:

I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,  
And let him find it, *seq.*

Othello enters. Iago gloats over his ruin, and says:

Not poppy, nor mandragora,  
Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,  
Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep  
Which thou owedst yesterday.

Othello is now completely under the control of his suspicions. His love for Desdemona gives way to despair, grief, rage. He commands Iago:

Avaunt ! be gone ! thou hast set me on the rack :  
I swear 't is better to be much abused  
Than but to know 't a little.

His love for Desdemona having died, life has no further attraction for Othello. In a few verses, which are one of the finest examples of Pathos in all literature, he expresses his farewell to everything which has made life attractive, joyous:



O, now, for ever  
 Farewell the tranquil mind ! farewell content !  
 Farewell the plumed troop, and the big wars,  
 That make ambition virtue ! *seq.*

Othello's heart is broken.

The night has a thousand eyes,  
 And the day but one ;  
 Yet the light of the bright world dies,  
 With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,  
 And the heart but one ;  
 Yet the light of a whole life dies,  
 When love is done.<sup>1</sup>

Then follows a reaction. As he questions the correctness of Iago's intimations, Othello's grief gives way to desperation :

Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,  
 Be sure of it ; give me the ocular proof ;  
 Or, by the worth of man's eternal soul,  
 Thou hadst been better have been born a dog  
 Than answer my waked wrath !

Shakespeare's portrayal of these conflicting currents of emotion in Othello manifests profound knowledge of the human heart, and masterly dramatic technique. Doubt, then wrath, hate, grief, fury, alternating with love, each feeling developed to the highest degree, like great waves of the ocean, one after another roll over, and finally submerge Othello's soul.

Iago's influence over Othello again asserts itself :

<sup>1</sup> Bourdillon.

By the world,  
I think my wife be honest and think she is not ;  
I think that thou art just and think thou art not: *seq.*

Iago then tells Othello what, he falsely asserts, Cassio said in a dream :

In sleep I heard him say " Sweet Desdemona,  
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves ;" *seq.*

Othello is now finally and completely convinced of Desdemona's unfaithfulness. He is almost insane with grief and rage :

O monstrous ! monstrous !

I'll tear her all to pieces.

Iago further informs him of the handkerchief which Desdemona had lost, and which was now in Cassio's possession. Othello's desire for revenge becomes more capacious :

O, that the slave had forty thousand lives !  
One is too poor, too weak for my revenge.

He kneels and swears revenge. Iago follows his example. Othello immediately puts Iago's loyalty to a test :

Within these three days let me hear thee say  
That Cassio 's not alive.

Iago accepts the test :

My friend is dead ; 't is done at your request

He pleads for Desdemona :

But let her live.

The effect is, as he hoped and intended, to develop Othello's desire for revenge to the intensest degree. It crystallizes into action:

Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her!  
Come, go with me apart; I will withdraw,  
To furnish me with some swift means of death  
For the fair devil.

This decision marks the crisis in the soul of Othello. Shakespeare has placed him under the control of an overpowering emotion. While in that condition he makes the decision that settles his fate. This is the acme of the Climax, the crest of the dramatic arch. All previous to this is the *desis*, all subsequent the *lusis*. It is the meeting-point of all the Complicating and Resolving forces.

Love for Desdemona dominated Othello at the beginning of the drama. That love has been entirely supplanted by hate, hate such as only a noble and outraged nature could feel. In such a case

passion seeks aid from its opposite passion.<sup>1</sup>

Love and hate, while antagonistic feelings, lie very near to each other. In fact, as Browning expresses it, they are

. . . the very warders  
Each of the other's borders.<sup>2</sup>

That hate which has supplanted love controls Othello from this time.

<sup>1</sup> Browning, *Pippa Passes*, Scene 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*.

Previous to this Iago has been the dominating force in the drama. All his plans have been successfully consummated. After this Othello's will asserts itself. From this time he controls and dominates the action.

Following this Scene, in which the thoughts and emotions of the spectator have been strained to the intensest degree, there must be a period of repose. Shakespeare, therefore, at the beginning of the last Scene of the Climax, introduces a humorous conversation between Desdemona and the Clown. It is a perfect example of what Charles Lamb calls "the relaxing levities of tragedy"; of the nature and function of a humorous Episode in a great tragedy. Desdemona asks the Clown:

Do you know, sirrah, where Lieutenant Cassio lies? *seq.*

This Episode brings mental and emotional rest and relief to the spectator.

As soon as the Clown retires Desdemona perceives the loss of the handkerchief. The tragic at once resumes sway. She is distressed, full of foreboding. She asks Emilia:

Where should I lose that handkerchief?

. . . . .  
Believe me, I had rather have lost my purse  
Full of crusadoes : and, but my noble Moor  
Is true of mind and made of no such baseness  
As jealous creatures are, it were enough  
To put him to ill thinking.

In view of the real state of Othello's feelings how pathetic is the guilelessness of Desdemona? This

pathos is intensified by the conversation that immediately ensues between Othello, who now enters, and Desdemona. Childlike, innocent, delicately obedient to the lightest whisper of honor, Desdemona entirely misunderstands Othello's insinuations:

How is 't with you, my lord? *seq.*

Desdemona, still blind to Othello's jealousy, pleads for Cassio. Othello stops her by saying:

I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me ;  
Lend me thy handkerchief.

He describes the handkerchief, its great value, and power to charm. Desdemona finally has to acknowledge she has lost it. Othello departs. He believes Iago's statement that Cassio has the handkerchief, and that Desdemona has given it to him.

The action of the drama now temporarily ceases movement. The Climax ends with two Episodes. Othello has retired. Desdemona and Emilia remain. To them Cassio and Iago enter.

Cassio renews his suit to Desdemona. She pathetically replies:

Alas, thrice-gentle Cassio !  
My advocacy is not now in tune ;  
My lord is not my lord ; nor should I know him,  
Were he in favour as in humour alter'd : *seq.*

Iago, the arch-hypocrite, blandly inquires:

Is my lord angry ?

and then goes to seek Othello. Desdemona is still unsuspecting. She thinks, and so says to Emilia, Othello's rage must be caused by

Something, sure, of state,  
Either from Venice, or some unhatch'd practice  
Made demonstrable here in Cyprus to him,  
Hath puddled his clear spirit.

Emilia has divined the true cause:

Pray heaven it be state-matters, as you think,  
And no conception nor no jealous toy  
Concerning you.

Desdemona and Emilia retire. Cassio is left alone.  
This is one Episode.

Desdemona and Emilia have hardly disappeared when Bianca enters. She is Cassio's mistress. The second of the two Episodes, with which the Climax ends, is a conversation between her and Cassio. She chides Cassio with slighting her. He gives her Desdemona's handkerchief. She says:

O Cassio, whence came this?  
This is some token from a newer friend:  
To the felt absence now I feel a cause:  
s't come to this? Well, well.

Cassio assures her her suspicions are unfounded.  
He begs her to retire as

I do attend here on the general.

They both make their exit, and the Climax ends.



In a drama the minor characters, those by whom the Sub-Actions are carried forward, reflect the principal characters, those in the Main Action. The emotions and thoughts which dominate the latter more or less dominate the former. Desdemona deceives her father and husband. Emilia deceives her about the handkerchief, telling her she knew not where it had been dropped. Iago, Othello, are jealous, suspicious; so are Roderigo, Bianca.

Iago's cruel, fiendish plot to compass the ruin of Othello and Desdemona has been successful:

. . . for whiles this honest fool  
Plies Desdemona to repair his fortunes  
And she for him pleads strongly to the Moor,  
I'll pour this pestilence into his ear,  
That she repeals him for her body's lust;  
And by how much she strives to do him good,  
She shall undo her credit with the Moor.  
So will I turn her virtue into pitch,  
And out of her own goodness make the net  
That shall enmesh them all.

This *net* has been craftily and strongly woven by Iago. Desdemona and Othello are securely and fatally enmeshed in it.

FALL

IV

When, at the close of the Climax, Othello was fully and finally convinced of Cassio's disloyalty, of Desdemona's unfaithfulness, he commanded Iago to

kill Cassio. Iago accepted the mission. The execution of what he believed to be justice on Desdemona Othello reserved to himself.

The Fall of a drama is more or less, sometimes entirely, episodic. During the Fall of this play the Main Action is entirely suspended. It is devoted not to killing Cassio and Desdemona, but simply to making all preparations therefor.

Towards the close of the Climax Iago had left Desdemona, Emilia, Cassio, and had gone to seek Othello. He finds him. They engage in conversation on the subject which is uppermost in the minds of both. The Fall begins with a report of this conversation:

*Iago.* Will you think so? *seq.*

After referring to a *kiss*, which is the refrain of Cassio's dream as described by Iago to Othello in III., 3, Iago mentions the handkerchief. It profoundly stirs Othello:

O, it comes o'er my memory,  
As doth the raven o'er the infected house,  
Boding to all—

This is poetic, ominous. Before the murder of Duncan Lady Macbeth said:

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements.

No less fatal is Iago's iterated and reiterated allusion to the handkerchief. It foreshadows Desdemona's death. The immediate effect on Othello is

like that of a *poisonous mineral* which doth gnaw his *inwards*; of a sharp dagger with which a wounded man is pierced again and again.

Othello's fury and grief now find expression in sentences that are illogical, disjointed, fragmentary:

Handkerchief—confessions—handkerchief!—To confess, and be hanged for his labour;—first, to be hanged, and then to confess.—I tremble at it. Nature would not invest herself in such shadowing passion without some instruction. It is not words that shake me thus. Pish! Noses, ears, and lips.—Is't possible?—Confess—handkerchief!—O devil!

When a man is conversing on the commonplace, practical affairs of life he uses prose. If the subject of the conversation be one by which his feelings are profoundly stirred, his language is impassioned and rhythmical. In the former case the intellect alone is exercised; in the latter the emotions as well as the intellect are in action. They find expression in words and sentences that pulsate, that have a heart-throb.

This is true of literature.<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare conforms to this law of human expression; *e. g.*, *Coriolanus*, I., 3; *Merchant of Venice*, I., 3; *Julius Cæsar*, III., 2.

Sometimes, however, human feeling, like a raging torrent, overleaps all bounds. Profound feeling, overmastering emotion, increase the rhythmical flow of the blood, the action of the heart. It

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bascom, *The Philosophy of English Literature*, p. 48; Herbert Spencer, *The Philosophy of Style*, part i., sec. iv.

chokes, closes, or expands the throat. A man then expresses himself not in verse, but in broken, fragmentary, ejaculatory prose.

When Lear, who has become insane, has a lucid interval he meets Gloucester (IV., 6). His feelings entirely overcome him. He ceases to speak in verse, and expresses himself in broken phrases that are intensely impassioned:

There 's hell, there 's darkness, there 's the sulphurous pit. Burning, scalding, stench, consumption ; fie, fie, fie ! pah, pah ! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary, to sweeten my imagination : there 's money for thee.

Likewise in this play Othello's words proceed from a heart surcharged with passion. He disregards grammar and rhetoric, and expresses himself in words that are disconnected, ejaculatory ; in sentences that are broken.

Othello was a brave man. He possessed a powerful physique. The tension of his feelings is so intense that it causes a physical breakdown. He falls in a trance. This, Iago informs us,

. . . is his second fit ; he had one yesterday.

While Othello is insensible Iago, in a monologue, reveals his thoughts and feelings:

Work on,

My medicine, work ! Thus credulous fools are caught ;  
And many worthy and chaste dames even thus,  
All guiltless, meet reproach.

In these words Iago discloses what is probably the primal characteristic of his nature, *viz.*, absence of emotion. He is pitiless.

The greatest check to wrong-doing comes from the emotions, either those of the criminal, or the emotions of others acting upon him and restraining him. The most brutal and fearless murderer quails before the mob. He cannot brave intense human emotion. The greatest crimes are committed only when pity is absent.

Iago is devoid of feeling. He is pitiless. His moral nature is in ruins. With the Duke of Gloucester he could say :

I that have neither pity, love nor fear.

He sees Othello almost insane with grief, utterly prostrated, yet can remain unmoved.

Cassio enters, and quickly withdraws. Othello recovers consciousness. He does not know Cassio has been present. He immediately asks :

Did he confess it ?

Iago now informs Othello that Cassio had been present. He begs Othello to retire, but to remain within hearing distance. He promises to extort a confession from him. Othello accedes to Iago's request. He says solemnly, fiercely, as a minister of justice :

Dost thou hear, Iago ?

I will be found most cunning in my patience ;  
But—dost thou hear ?—most bloody.

Othello then retires. Iago, in a soliloquy, reveals his plan.

Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,

He, when he hears of her, cannot refrain

From the excess of laughter. Here he comes :

[*Re-enter Cassio.*

As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad.

Iago's plan works perfectly. Cassio, in all he says, refers to Bianca. Othello, whose jealousy is *un-bookish*, *i. e.*, unintelligent, whose suspicions have completely blinded him, thinks Cassio's references are all to Desdemona. The effect on Othello is described by Shakespeare in a conversation between Othello and Iago. It is a marvellous piece of work; a masterly description of the deepest and strongest feelings of a noble and brave man when nearly insane with suspicion of her he loves. After Cassio's exit, Othello, advancing, says:

How shall I murder him, Iago? *seq.*

In all literature there is no portrayal greater than this of the struggle in a good but misguided man between rage that is murderous, and grief that is heart-breaking. As Othello remembers her he trusted and loved:

O, the world hath not a sweeter creature:

As he thinks of her supposed unfaithfulness:

My heart is turned to stone : I strike it, and it hurts my hand.



Lodovico, a kinsman of Brabantio, now enters. With him is Desdemona. This is his first appearance in the drama. It is a canon of dramatic art that all persons who play an important part in the action of a drama must be brought on the stage in the Introduction, or at the beginning of the action. Lodovico does not appear till towards the close of the play. Why? Because he is not an important character. He, as also Gratiano, who first appears in the last Act, is a Link-Person.

Lodovico bears a message to Othello from the Duke and Senators of Venice:

. . . they do command him home,  
Deputing Cassio in his government.

Nothing could intensify Othello's already overwrought feelings more than that he should be recalled, and that the very man who he believed had cruelly wronged him should be appointed to succeed him. He strikes Desdemona; calls her *Devil!* and peremptorily orders her,

Hence, avaunt!—

Lodovico is so surprised he says:

My lord, this would not be believed in Venice,  
Though I should swear I saw 't.

Othello makes his exit. Lodovico inquires:

Are his wits safe? is he not light of brain?

He then adds:

I am sorry that I am deceived in him.

So ends Scene 1.

Scene 2 begins with an interview between Othello and Emilia. He questions her as to Desdemona's relations with Cassio. Emilia replies:

I durst, my lord, to wager she is honest,  
Lay down my soul at stake : *seq.*

Othello distrusts Emilia as well as Desdemona. He sends her for her mistress. They return together. Desdemona says:

My lord, what is your will ?

Othello now orders Emilia to retire, and to stand guard at the door. He and Desdemona are left alone. Desdemona says:

Upon my knees, what doth your speech import ?  
I understand a fury in your words,  
But not the words.

Othello's grief is so acute it causes him to weep. He says:

Had it pleased heaven  
To try me with affliction ; had they rain'd  
All kinds of sores and shames on my bare head : *seq.*

The force and velocity of the current of a river depend on its depth ; so capacity for suffering mental and emotional anguish is one of the highest tests of nobility of nature.

Othello retires. Just as this distressing interview ends Emilia enters. She asks:

Alas, what does this gentleman conceive ?

Desdemona, conscious of her own innocence, is dazed. She still loves Othello. She does not blame him, but fortune.

It is my wretched fortune.

Emilia, who has made her exit, now returns with Iago. She takes a different, and more practical, view of the matter:

I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,  
Some busy and insinuating rogue,  
Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,  
Have not devised this slander ; I 'll be hang'd else : *seq.*

She unwittingly, and with the utmost accuracy, describes her husband, who is the villain.

Desdemona and Emilia make their exit. Iago is left alone. Roderigo enters. He protests vigorously against the treatment he has received from Iago. Iago has taken Roderigo's money and jewels, ostensibly for the purpose of giving them to Desdemona, and so winning her favor for Roderigo. Iago has kept them for himself. He does not reply directly to Roderigo's charges, but informs him of Othello's recall, and of the appointment of Cassio to the chief command. He then craftily proposes to Roderigo that he kill Cassio. They depart together, and this Scene ends.

In the last Scene of the Fall, Othello, Lodovico, Desdemona, Emilia, and attendants enter. After a word or two with Lodovico, Othello commands Desdemona :

Get you to bed on the instant ; I will be returned forthwith : dismiss your attendant there : look it be done.

Othello, Lodovico, and attendants retire. Desdemona and Emilia are left alone, and the remainder of this Scene, and this division of the drama, is devoted to a conversation between them.

A change has come over Othello. Emilia has noticed it. She says:

. . . he looks gentler than he did.

This is but the lull before the storm. It bespeaks the man whose mind is settled. The conflict in Othello between doubt and certainty, between irresolution and resolution, is ended. He has experienced to the intensest degree the truthfulness of Iago's reflection :

But, O, what damned minutes tells he o'er  
Who dotes, yet doubts, suspects, yet strongly loves !

This now has ended. The time for action has arrived.

Before dismissing Emilia, as Othello had ordered, Desdemona makes all preparations to retire. She still protests her love for Othello. When Emilia expresses the wish that Desdemona had never seen him, she responds :

So would not I : my love doth so approve him,  
That even his stubbornness, his checks, his frowns,—  
Prithee, unpin me,—have grace and favour in them.

In the drama, as in human life, coming events

cast their shadows before. Desdemona now has a presentiment of impending death :

Good faith, how foolish are our minds !  
If I do die before thee, prithee, shroud me  
In one of those same sheets.

She sings a song full of tenderness, pathos, foreboding. She says to Emilia :

Mine eyes do itch ;  
Doth that bode weeping ?

Having thus in the most unmistakable manner foreshadowed Desdemona's death Shakespeare now introduces a final conversation between her and Emilia, on a subject radically different from any that have preceded. The dramatic purpose of this conversation is to reveal, once more, Desdemona's spotless purity.

Desdemona, who is as *chaste as ice, as pure as snow*, not only cannot be unfaithful herself, but cannot believe any woman could be unfaithful. Emilia, who is coarse, vulgar, dissents from this opinion. By means of her, with whom Desdemona is contrasted (this is one of Emilia's dramatic functions), Shakespeare reveals in brighter light the true womanliness, the spotless purity of Desdemona.

So ends this Act, and this division of the drama. During it the Main Action has been temporarily stayed. And yet there has been dramatic progress. Every preparation has been made for the Catastrophe. Othello's determination to kill Desdemona has been irrevocably settled. What he said in the Climax is now, for the first time, absolutely true :

Like to the Pontic sea,  
Whose icy current and compulsive course  
Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on  
To the Propontic and the Hellespont,  
Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,  
Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,  
Till that a capable and wide revenge  
Swallow them up.

It only needs a fitting opportunity to put that determination into action. Othello has made that opportunity. Iago has suggested to Roderigo the murder of Cassio. Desdemona has a well-defined presentiment of her early and violent death.

## CATASTROPHE

## V

With the commencement of the Catastrophe the action of the drama again, and immediately, begins movement, and progresses to the end rapidly and without cessation.

At the beginning of the Catastrophe Roderigo and Iago appear, prepared to execute the plot to kill Cassio. Before they attempt the murder, each, by means of a monologue, lays bare his heart and mind.

Roderigo, at first, hesitates. A moment later he determines to do the deed:

I have no great devotion to the deed ;  
And yet he hath given me satisfying reasons :  
'Tis but a man gone. Forth, my sword : he dies.



Iago, who has retired to a place where he cannot be seen or heard by Roderigo, says:

I have rubb'd this young quat almost to the sense,  
And he grows angry. Now, whether he kill Cassio,  
Or Cassio him, or each do kill the other,  
Every way makes my gain: *seq.*

Iago now stands *in much peril*. The beginning of crime is like sliding down hill. Such a movement generates momentum. The same law is in force in morals. The application of this law to dramatic art is known in the Greek drama as Nemesis, "the anger of fate, whether foredoomed or avenging." In the Shakesperian drama it is Poetic Justice. Iago's fate is an example. He says:

Live Roderigo,  
He calls me to a restitution large  
Of gold and jewels that I bobb'd from him,  
As gifts to Desdemona ;  
It must not be: if Cassio do remain,  
He hath a daily beauty in his life  
That makes me ugly ; and, besides, the Moor  
May unfold me to him ; there stand I in much peril:  
No, he must die.

In these two soliloquies the motives and purposes of these two men are once more, and fully, revealed.

Immediately after they are spoken Cassio enters. Roderigo assaults him. Cassio's coat protects him. He is not injured. Then he, in turn, attacks and wounds Roderigo. Iago, whom Cassio has not seen, assaults and wounds Cassio, and quickly retires.

Othello enters. He hears the cries of the wounded men. He supposes Iago has killed Cassio, and says:

The voice of Cassio: Iago keeps his word.

. . . O brave Iago, honest and just.

The calls for help uttered by Cassio and Roderigo have been heard by Lodovico and Gratiano, who now enter. A moment later, Iago, partially dressed, with *light and weapons*, re-enters. Shakespeare makes him appear thus in order that it may seem that Iago has suddenly been aroused from sleep by the cries for help. The time has not yet arrived for the complete revelation to the others in the play of Iago's character. By this ruse Iago deceives both Lodovico and Gratiano; and Roderigo and Cassio, as well.

Iago expresses surprise, distress, resentment. He professes himself anxious to aid Cassio. When Cassio accuses Roderigo, who is lying near him wounded, whom he does not recognize, as the villain who wounded him, Iago, pretending to revenge the assault on Cassio, stabs Roderigo, saying:

O murderous slave ! O villain !

Roderigo is mortally wounded. Before dying he recognizes Iago as his assailant, and denounces his treason:

O damn'd Iago ! O inhuman dog !

Iago knew it was Roderigo, and was only too glad to seal his lips in death.

Iago recognizes Lodovico. He expresses the strongest desire to assist Cassio. Bianca enters. In order to divert suspicion from himself Iago professes to believe she is a party to the assault on Cassio:

Gentlemen all, I do suspect this trash  
To be a party to this injury.

Then turning to Roderigo's corpse, he says:

Know we this face or no ?  
Alas, my friend and my dear countryman  
Roderigo ! no :—yes, sure :—O heaven ! Roderigo.

To Cassio he says:

He that lies slain here, Cassio,  
Was my dear friend : what malice was between you ?

The diabolic and skilful duplicity of Iago becomes more and more apparent. He promises Othello that, out of loyalty to him, he will murder Cassio. By appealing to the basest impulses of Roderigo he induces him to attempt the murder of Cassio. When Cassio, in self-defence, stabs Roderigo, Iago stabs Cassio; and, later, when Cassio charges Roderigo with being his assailant Iago kills Roderigo. Then, when Roderigo's corpse, and Cassio, wounded, are borne away, he again directs suspicion towards Bianca.

Emilia now enters. To her Iago makes the statement, not only for her information, but also to impress it upon Lodovico and Gratiano:

Cassio hath here been set on in the dark  
By Roderigo and fellows that are scaped:  
He's almost slain, and Roderigo dead.

He once more throws suspicion on Bianca, and orders Emilia:

Emilia, run you to the citadel,  
And tell my lord and lady what hath happ'd.

Then, in an *aside*, Iago reveals his desperate situation:

This is the night  
That either makes me or fordoes me quite.

Shakespeare's purpose in making Iago send Emilia to the citadel was not only, not primarily, to inform Othello and Desdemona of Roderigo's death and Cassio's wounds, but to direct the attention of the spectators to the citadel, where, in a bed-chamber, the conclusion of the drama takes place. It is by these little, apparently insignificant touches, which only the trained eye of the critic sees, that Shakespeare manifests his perfect technique.

In this bedchamber, in which a light is burning, Desdemona is lying in bed, asleep. She is a picture, lovely, chaste, gentle, beautiful, *a sweeter creature the world hath not seen*. Othello enters. As he beholds Desdemona he soliloquizes, and reveals to us the frightful struggle taking place within him between his almost deathless love on the one hand, and what he believes to be his solemn duty on the other:

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul. *seq.*

Desdemona awakens. The final conversation between her and Othello is held. He informs her he intends to kill her. She pleads for her life. His manner, as well as words, beget fear in her:

And yet I fear you ; for you are fatal then  
When your eyes roll so: *seq.*

Her only sins, she tells Othello,

. . . are loves I bear to you,

an appeal which would touch the heart of any man, unless he were heartless like Iago, or crazed with doubt and jealousy as was Othello. Othello's rage becomes uncontrollable:

Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:  
These are portents ; but yet I hope, I hope,  
They do not point on me.

Othello then refers to the handkerchief. He charges her with having given it to Cassio. The evidence of this, poor misguided man, he believes to be unimpeachable. It seems to him damning proof of her unfaithfulness. Her denials he refuses to believe. Desdemona then entreats him, first, for her life, and when he denies that, for a little delay:

O, banish me, my lord, but kill me not !

Othello refuses. He stifles her. Emilia, bearing the message from Iago, arrives. She calls. Othello does not at once respond. He delays her entrance. Finally he admits her. She announces the death

of Roderigo. Desdemona has been stifled, but not killed; she faintly says:

O, falsely, falsely murder'd !

. . . . .  
A guiltless death I die.

Othello then tells Emilia that Desdemona was untrue, and that his authority for the assertion was Iago. Emilia is astonished, she cannot believe it, and says, again and again,

My husband !

Othello becomes angry and responds:

He, woman ;

I say thy husband: dost understand the word ?

My friend, thy husband, honest, honest Iago.

Emilia perceives that Iago has played false with Othello, and that he is a *hellish villain*, more fierce, savage, cruel, than

. . . anguish, hunger, or the sea !

She replies to Othello:

If he say so, may his pernicious soul

Rot half a grain a day ! he lies to the heart:

She was too fond of her most filthy bargain.

Emilia denounces Othello. She goes further, and defies him.

The action of the drama is now moving with almost lightning rapidity. Roderigo and Desdemona



have been murdered. Their dramatic lives are ended.

In response to Emilia's outcries Montano, Gratiano, Iago, and others, enter. Emilia, whose whole nature is outraged by the base and baseless accusations against her mistress, has become defiant, fearless, desperate. She immediately says to Iago:

Disprove this villain, if thou be'st a man: *seq.*

When Iago acknowledges he so said, she responds:

You told a lie, an odious, damned lie ; *seq.*

All Iago's efforts to silence Emilia are unsuccessful. She speaks in no uncertain sound:

Villany, villany, villany ! *seq.*

Othello seems impressed and oppressed by what she says. He falls upon the bed. A moment later he rises, and tries to justify his deed to Gratiano, Desdemona's uncle. Gratiano, ignoring Othello's effort to justify *his act*, which *shows horrible and grim*, says:

Poor Desdemona ! I am glad thy father's dead :  
Tny match was mortal to him, and pure grief  
Shore his old thread in twain : *seq.*

This allusion to Brabantio's death manifests fine technique on Shakespeare's part. It reveals two facts:

I.—This marriage was as fatal to Brabantio as to Desdemona, Othello, and so many others.

II.—In the most skilful and dramatic manner it accounts for Brabantio's removal from the drama, after the Introduction.

Othello again attempts to justify his deed. Iago renews his effort to silence Emilia. Both attempts are fruitless. Iago realizes that Emilia's revelation will be fatal to himself. He attempts to stab her, but is unsuccessful. Her dramatic life is not to end until she reveals fully the story of the handkerchief:

O thou dull Moor ! that handkerchief thou speak'st of  
I found by fortune and did give my husband ;  
For often, with a solemn earnestness,  
More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle,  
He begg'd of me to steal it.

Having made this revelation, and thereby resolved the complication caused by the handkerchief, and made manifest the villainy of Iago and the innocence of Desdemona, Emilia's work in the drama is almost completed. Iago stabs her fatally, and then escapes. Before Emilia dies, however, and with her very latest breath, she again testifies to Desdemona's spotless purity:

Moor, she was chaste ; she loved thee, cruel Moor ;  
So come my soul to bliss, as I speak true ;  
So speaking as I think, I die, I die.

These revelations of Emilia go far to resolve the Complication of the drama. They are a perfect example of the *lusis*, the untying of the dramatic knot.

Montano seizes Othello's sword and gives it to Gratiano, commanding him,

. . . let him not pass,  
But kill him rather.

Montano himself pursues Iago, to wreak vengeance on him. Gratiano guards the door without to prevent Othello's escape.

The effect of Emilia's revelations on Othello is what might be expected in the case of a brave, true man. Life without honor has no attraction for Othello. Nothing remains for him but death. For that he makes every preparation. He finds another sword in the chamber. He calls to Gratiano to allow him to come forth. Gratiano demurs. On Othello's invitation he enters. Othello addresses him. He reveals the radical change wrought in him by Emilia's statements:

Behold, I have a weapon ;  
A better never did itself sustain  
Upon a soldier's thigh : *seq.*

Several persons enter. They constitute the last group in the play. Othello is there. So are Gratiano, Desdemona's uncle, Lodovico, her kinsman, Montano, the Governor of Cyprus, Cassio, who is wounded, Iago, a prisoner. Lodovico speaks first. He does not chide Othello. He recognizes the fact that Othello has been deceived. He speaks of him as

. . . this rash and most unfortunate man.

Then, turning to the officers in whose charge Iago is, he says:

Where is that viper ? bring the villain forth.

Othello looks at Iago's feet, to see if they are cloven. He thinks none but a devil could act as Iago has. He wounds Iago, who bleeds, but is not killed. Othello does not regret this. To a man like Iago the greatest punishment is that of Cain, not death, but life prolonged, filled with physical torture, and some, at least, of remorse.

Lodovico then again addresses Othello as one who is a victim of misplaced confidence. Othello describes himself, and does so with the utmost accuracy, as

An honourable murderer, if you will ;  
For nought I did in hate, but all in honour.

Lodovico says:

This wretch hath part confess'd his villany :  
Did you and he consent in Cassio's death ?

Othello promptly and frankly answers:

Ay.

Cassio, of whom Iago said,

He hath a daily beauty in his life,  
on hearing Othello's confession, said, without bitterness or malice:

Dear general, I never gave you cause.

Othello assents to this. He begs Cassio's pardon, and adds:

Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil  
Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body ?

There are two facts in connection with this question of Othello which, apparently insignificant, are really of great importance, and reveal the hand of the master:

I.—Othello describes Iago not as a devil but a *demi-devil*. If Shakespeare had made Iago a devil he would have alienated our interest in him. He, therefore, while making him diabolic, made him also a man, having some ostensible reason for his wickedness.

II.—Othello also says:

. . . ensnared my soul and body.

When Othello is finally and fully convinced that Desdemona is innocent he realizes there is but one course open to him, *viz.*, suicide. This is foreshadowed in his remark just cited.

The last words Iago utters are:

Demand me nothing : what you know, you know :  
From this time forth I never will speak word.

Having successfully accomplished his hellish plans to wreak vengeance on Cassio and Othello, and having brought ruin and death to so many, this man now seeks refuge, not in repentance, but in sullen, defiant silence.

In order to throw still more light on the Complication of the play, and to make the Resolution more complete, Shakespeare makes Lodovico reveal the contents of two letters found in the pockets of the dead Roderigo:

. . . the one of them imports  
The death of Cassio to be undertook  
By Roderigo.

And the other :

There is besides in Roderigo's letter,  
How he upbraids Iago, that he made him  
Brave me upon the watch ; whereon it came  
That I was cast : and even but now he spake,  
After long seeming dead, Iago hurt him,  
Iago set him on.

Still further does Shakespeare resolve the Complication by making Cassio tell Othello how he came by the handkerchief :

I found it in my chamber :  
And he himself confess'd but even now  
That there he dropp'd it for a special purpose  
Which wrought to his desire.

Thus, step by step, with masterly skill, all the Complication of the drama has been resolved. The hidden methods by which Iago

. . . put the Moor  
At least into a jealousy so strong  
That judgement cannot cure

have all been revealed.

Iago is wounded, and in custody awaiting retribution for his deeds. Cassio's innocence is fully established. Desdemona's dying assertion,

A guiltless death I die,  
has been proven true.



It only remains now for Shakespeare to end the dramatic life of Othello. Lodovico, the representative of the Duke of Venice, assumes judicial functions. Addressing Othello, he says:

You shall close prisoner rest,  
Till that the nature of your fault be known  
To the Venetian state.

Othello responds, and his words are a perfect specimen of narrative verse:

Soft you ; a word or two before you go.  
I have done the state some service, and they know 't.  
No more of that. I pray you, in your letters,  
When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,  
Speak of me as I am ; nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice : then must you speak  
Of one that loved not wisely but too well ;  
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought  
Perplex'd in the extreme ; of one whose hand,  
Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away  
Richer than all his tribe ; of one whose subdued eyes,  
Albeit unused to the melting mood,  
Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees  
Their medicinal gum. Set you down this ;  
And say besides, that in Aleppo once,  
Where a malignant and a turban'd <sup>1</sup> Turk  
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,  
I took by the throat the circumcised dog,  
And smote him, thus. (Stabs himself.)

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare frequently, as here, couples together an abstract and a concrete adjective, *e. g.*, *the sear, the yellow leaf ; a nipping and an eager air ; Diana's lip is not more smooth and rubious ; a robustious periwig-pated fellow ; the wealthy curled darlings ; some sweet oblivious antidote.*

Before dying, addressing Desdemona's corpse, he pathetically adds:

I kiss'd thee ere I killed thee :—no way but this ;  
Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.

[*Falls on the bed, and dies.*]

Such anguish as Othello's can only be assuaged in Paradise, and by her whom he sent thither. He, therefore, hurries after her.

The play then ends with Lodovico's words to Iago, to Gratiano, to Cassio:

O Spartan dog, *seq.*

Iago, whose hate is implacable, fierce, deadly, who is, as Roderigo with his dying breath describes him, *an inhuman dog*, lives. His victims are either wounded or dead. Is Shakespeare's drama in this true to life ?

The great problem of human life is the existence of evil. And, therefore, one of the great objects of the poet's interpretation of life by plot, or interwoven action, is to exhibit a relationship between apparently undeserved calamity and some principle which is based upon natural and divine law, or on both.<sup>1</sup>

Does this great play exhibit this relationship ?

A drama is a transcript of human life. If it is a perfect work of Art it must be in accord with the experiences of men and women. Mistakes always bring their penalties just as inevitably as do crimes. Misplaced confidence wrecks many lives. Cassio allowed Iago to persuade him to put into his mouth

<sup>1</sup> Worsfold, *Principles of Criticism*, p. 188, *seq.*

an enemy that *stole away his brains*. *The devil drunkenness* and *the devil wrath* take possession of him. His command is taken from him. He is disgraced. Eventually, as one of the further results of his conduct, he is seriously wounded. Othello, *great of heart*, as Cassio says,—*of a constant, loving, noble nature*, as Iago asserts,—allowed himself to be

. . . as tenderly led by the nose  
As asses are.

The consequence is, he is ruined.

Patroclus' warning to Achilles (*Troilus and Cressida*) applies to both Cassio and Othello:

O, then, beware !  
Those wounds heal ill that men do give themselves.  
Omission to do what is necessary  
Seals a commission to a blank of danger;  
And danger, like an ague, subtly taints  
Even then when we sit idly in the sun.

In the drama, as in human life,

Some innocents 'scape not the thunderbolt.

Emilia's loyalty to her mistress costs her her life. The pure, unselfish, loyal, loving Desdemona is cruelly murdered. Like Cordelia, like many another woman in real life, she is a victim of circumstances. Iago is wounded but not killed. Life will bring to him the just and full retribution of his deeds.

Thus Shakespeare's conclusion of this play is in perfect harmony with all the demands of Poetic Justice.

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




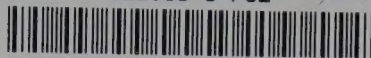




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